

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventy-sixth
Annual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

April 1 and 2, 2006

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Report of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, April 1, 2006, at 10:00 a.m.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, April 1 and 2, 2006. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, April 1, at 6:00 p.m.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference. President Thomas S. Monson conducted the Saturday afternoon, priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust conducted the Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon sessions.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. The proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities

First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar

Presidency of the Seventy: Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Charles Didier, Merrill J. Bateman, Robert C. Oaks, Neil L. Andersen, and Ronald A. Rasband

First Quorum of the Seventy: Carlos H. Amado, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Monte J. Brough, Sheldon F. Child, L. Whitney Clayton, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Benjamín De Hoyos, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, David F. Evans, Christoffel Golden Jr., Walter F. González, C. Scott Grow, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, Keith K. Hilbig, Richard G. Hinckley, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Daniel L. Johnson, Kenneth Johnson, Paul V. Johnson, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Paul E. Koeliker, John M. Madsen, Richard J. Maynes, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Marcus B. Nash, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, Anthony D. Perkins, Paul B. Pieper, Bruce D. Porter, Carl B. Pratt, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Steven E. Snow, Ulisses Soares, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Mervyn B. Arnold, Douglas L. Callister, Craig A. Cardon, Craig C. Christensen, Shirley D. Christensen, Don R. Clarke, James M. Dunn, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Daryl H. Garn, D. Rex Gerratt, Larry W. Gibbons, Ronald T. Halverson, Spencer V. Jones, Won Yong Ko, Gerald N. Lund, Clate W. Mask Jr., Dale E. Miller, Robert F. Orton, William W. Parmley, Wolfgang H. Paul, Wayne S. Peterson, H. Bryan Richards, R. Conrad Schultz, W. Douglas Shumway, Lowell M. Snow, Donald L. Staheli, Robert R. Steuer, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Paul K. Sybrowsky, William R. Walker, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H. Winkel, Robert S. Wood, and H. Ross Workman

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 1, 2006. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and John Longhurst and Richard Elliott were the organists. To begin this session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Faust then made the following remarks.

President James E. Faust

We welcome you to the first general session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand in the Conference Center and in the Assembly Hall and likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies in attendance at this conference.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and satellite and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at lds.org.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with John Longhurst and Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Dearest Children, God Is Near You." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Claudio R. M. Costa of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Dearest Children, God Is Near You."

Elder Claudio R. M. Costa offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "Did You Think to Pray?" Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker, after which we shall be pleased to hear from Bishop H. David Burton, Presiding Bishop of the Church.

The choir and congregation will then sing "Now Let Us Rejoice." Following the singing, we will hear from Sister Julie B. Beck, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency. The choir will then sing "For the Beauty of the Earth."

After the choir has sung, we will be pleased to hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by the choir singing "Consider the Lilies."

The choir sang "Did You Think to Pray?"

Elder Robert D. Hales

Lehi taught the principle of agency

I am grateful for the testimony of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. On behalf of all members throughout the world, I express gratitude that he chose to follow the inspiration of the Lord and asked us to read the Book of Mormon. We have been abundantly blessed by his inspired counsel.

Father Lehi, the first prophet recorded in the Book of Mormon, also chose to follow the Lord. He was instructed to “take his family and depart into the wilderness.”¹ Despite harsh traveling conditions and the murmuring of his sons Laman and Lemuel, Lehi led his family to a land of promise. But it was not a place of peace. As Laman and Lemuel used their agency to disobey the Lord, Lehi’s “heart [was] weighed down with sorrow [for them].”² Before his death, Lehi gathered his children around him, blessed them, and counseled them.³ To his rebellious sons he urged repentance and faithfulness: “Awake, my sons. . . . Shake off the chains with which ye are bound.”⁴ And to his righteous son Jacob he taught one final, very important lesson.

If we could leave one lesson of greatest importance for *our* children and grandchildren, what would it be? Of all the glorious principles of the gospel, Lehi chose to teach his son about the plan of salvation—and the gift of agency.

He taught that “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil.”⁵ This sacred instruction began in the heavens. There, in a Grand Council, our Heavenly Father would continue the gift of agency to prove us here in mortality, “to see if [we] will do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command.”⁶

Rebellion of Satan

But Satan opposed God and His plan, saying, “I will redeem all mankind . . . ;

wherefore give me thine honor.”⁷ “Wherefore, because . . . Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, . . . I caused that he should be cast down.”⁸ “And, at that day, many followed after him.”⁹ Indeed, “a third part of the hosts of heaven”¹⁰ used their agency to reject God’s plan.

You and I were among those who used their agency to accept Heavenly Father’s plan to come to earth, to have a mortal life, to progress. “We shouted for joy . . . to have the opportunity of coming to the earth to receive bodies [for we knew] that we might become, through faithfulness, like unto our Father, God.”¹¹

Opposition a part of mortality

Now we are here on earth, where opportunities to use our agency abound, for here “there is an opposition in all things.”¹² This opposition is essential to the purpose of our lives. As Lehi explained: “To bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, . . . the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.”¹³

Adam and Eve were the first of God’s children to experience these enticements. Having sought the misery of all mankind, Satan, “the father of all lies,”¹⁴ tempted Adam and Eve. Because they chose to partake of the “forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth.”¹⁵ Because of that choice, they also “brought forth children; . . . even the family of all the earth,”¹⁶ and this earthly state “became a state of probation”¹⁷ for them and for their posterity. For “behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things,” Lehi told Jacob. “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”¹⁸

Sometimes we forget that our Heavenly Father desires that each of us have this joy. Only by yielding to temptation and sin can we be kept from that joy. And yielding is exactly what Satan wants us to do.

I once had an opportunity to accompany President Spencer W. Kimball to a distant land. We were given a tour of the various sites in the area, including underground catacombs—burial grounds for people who had been persecuted by Christian zealots. As we came up the dark, narrow stairs of that place, President Kimball taught me an unforgettable lesson. He pulled my coat tail and said, “It has always troubled me what the adversary does using the name of our Savior.” He then said, “Robert, the adversary can never have joy unless you and I sin.”

As I contemplated this comment and studied the scriptures, I began to understand what President Kimball may have meant. I recalled the word of the Lord to all the inhabitants of the earth as recorded in the Book of Mormon: “Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people.”¹⁹ It is our sins that make the devil laugh, our sorrow that brings him counterfeit joy.

Satan influences us only if we allow it

Although the devil laughs, his power is limited. Some may remember the old adage: “The devil made me do it.” Today I want to convey, in absolutely certain terms, that the adversary cannot make us do anything. He does lie at our door, as the scriptures say, and he follows us each day.²⁰ Every time we go out, every decision we make, we are either choosing to move in his direction or in the direction of our Savior. But the adversary must depart if we tell him to depart. He cannot influence us unless we allow him to do so, and

he knows that! The only time he can affect our minds and bodies—our very spirits—is when we *allow* him to do so. In other words, we do not have to succumb to his enticements!

We have been given agency, we have been given the blessings of the priesthood, and we have been given the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost *for a reason*. That reason is our growth and happiness in this world and eternal life in the world to come. Today I ask, have we received that Spirit? Are we following on the strait and narrow path that leads to God and eternal life? Are we holding on to the iron rod, or are we going another way? I testify that how we choose to *feel* and *think* and *act* every day is the way we get on the path, and stay on it, until we reach our eternal destination.

Acting rather than being acted upon

Now, none of us are on the narrow path *all* of the time. All of us make mistakes. That is why Lehi, who understood the Savior’s role in preserving and reclaiming our agency, taught Jacob—and us: “The Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon.”²¹ That is the key—“to act for themselves and not to be acted upon.”

In these latter days, as in the times of old, we must avoid being acted upon by acting for ourselves to avoid evil. The Holy Ghost will prompt us. Joseph was told to flee from Potiphar’s wife. Abraham obeyed the commandment to flee out of the land of Ur. Lehi was instructed to flee Jerusalem before it was destroyed. And to protect the Savior’s life, Mary and Joseph were prompted to flee into Egypt.

The promptings that come to us to flee evil reflect our Heavenly Father’s understanding of our particular strengths

and weaknesses and His awareness of the unforeseen circumstances of our lives. When these promptings come, they will not generally stop us in our tracks, for the Spirit of God does not speak with a voice of thunder. The voice will be as soft as a whisper, coming as a thought to our minds or a feeling in our hearts. By heeding its gentle promptings, we will be protected from the destructive consequences of sin.

But if we ignore those promptings, the light of the Spirit will fade. Our agency will be limited or lost, and we will lose the confidence and ability to act. We will be “walking in [spiritual] darkness at noon-day.”²² Then how easy it is to wander into strange paths and become lost! How quickly we are bound in the chains of sin spoken of by Lehi to his rebellious sons.²³ For example, if we make choices that put us deeply in debt, we will lose our agency to meet our wants and needs or to save for that inevitable rainy day. If we choose to break the law, we may be put in prison, where our agency is so limited that we cannot choose where we go, who we see, or what we do. Spirit prison is very much like that. Therefore, to retain our agency we must daily walk in the light of our Lord and Savior and follow the path of obedience. It is the only path that leads to our Father in Heaven.

Exercising agency to overcome sin

If, through our unrighteous choices, we have lost our footing on that path, we must remember the agency we were given, agency we may choose to exercise again. I speak especially to those overcome by the thick darkness of addiction. If you have fallen into destructive, addictive behaviors, you may feel that you are spiritually in a black hole. As with the real black holes in space, it may seem all but impossible for light to penetrate to where you are. How do you escape? I testify the only way is through the very agency you exercised so valiantly in your premortal life, the agency

that the adversary cannot take away without your yielding it to him.

How do you reclaim that agency? How do you begin again to exercise it in the right way? You choose to act in faith and obedience. May I suggest a few basic choices that you can begin to make now—this very day.

Choose to accept—truly accept—that you are a child of God, that He loves you, and that He has the power to help you.

Choose to put everything—literally everything—on the altar before Him. Believing that you are His child, decide that your life belongs to Him and that you will use your agency to do His will. You may do this multiple times in your life, but never, never give up.

Choose to put yourself in a position to have experiences with the Spirit of God through prayer, in scripture study, at Church meetings, in your home, and through wholesome interactions with others. When you feel the influence of the Spirit, you are beginning to be cleansed and strengthened. The light is being turned on, and where that light shines, the darkness of evil cannot remain.

Choose to obey and keep your covenants, beginning with your baptismal covenant. Renew these covenants weekly by worthily partaking of the sacrament.

Choose to prepare to worthily attend the temple, make and renew sacred covenants, and receive all of the saving ordinances and blessings of the gospel.

Finally, and most importantly, *choose* to believe in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Accept the Savior’s forgiveness, and then forgive yourself. Because of His sacrifice for you, He has the power to “remember [your sins] no more.”²⁴ You must do likewise.

After you are on the path and are “free to choose” again, choose to reject feelings of shame for sins you have already repented of, refuse to be discouraged about the past, and rejoice in hope for the future. Remember, it is Satan who desires

that we be “miserable like unto himself.”²⁵ Let your desires be stronger than his. Be happy and confident about your life and about the opportunities and blessings that await you here and throughout eternity.

Finally, remember our agency is not only for us. We have the responsibility to use it in behalf of others, to lift and strengthen others in their trials and tribulations. Some of our brothers and sisters have lost the full use of their agency through unrighteous choices. Without exposing ourselves to temptation, we can and should invite others to receive the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through friendship and love, we may lead them along the path of obedience and encourage them to use their agency to make the right choices once again.

Blessings of agency

As Father Lehi testified to his family of the blessings of agency, I also desire to testify to you, my beloved brothers and sisters throughout the world, and to my family. Agency was manifested in the Council in Heaven as we chose to follow our Heavenly Father’s plan and come to mortality for this probationary period. Agency allows us to be tested and tried to see whether or not we will endure to the end and return to our Heavenly Father with honor. Agency is the catalyst that leads us to express our inward spiritual desires in outward Christlike behavior. Agency permits us to make faithful, obedient choices that strengthen us so that we can lift and strengthen others. Agency used righteously allows light to dispel the darkness and enables us to live with joy and happiness in the present, look with faith to the future, even into the eternities, and not dwell on the things of the past. Our use of agency determines who we are and what we will be.

To all who desire to enjoy the supernal blessings of agency, I testify that agency is strengthened by our faith and obedience. Agency leads us to act: to seek that we may find, to ask that we may receive guidance from the Spirit, to knock on that door that leads to spiritual light and ultimately salvation. I bear special witness that our Savior Jesus Christ is the source of that light, even the Light and Life of the World. As we use our agency to follow Him, His light will grow within us brighter and brighter until that perfect day²⁶ when we are welcomed into the presence of our Father in Heaven for all eternity. That we will use our agency to that sacred and glorious end, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Nephi 2:2.
2. 2 Nephi 1:17.
3. See 2 Nephi 1:14.
4. 2 Nephi 1:23.
5. 2 Nephi 2:5.
6. See Abraham 3:24–25.
7. Moses 4:1.
8. Moses 4:3.
9. Abraham 3:28.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 29:36.
11. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny* (1965), 277.
12. 2 Nephi 2:11.
13. 2 Nephi 2:15–16.
14. 2 Nephi 2:18.
15. 2 Nephi 2:19.
16. 2 Nephi 2:20.
17. 2 Nephi 2:21.
18. 2 Nephi 2:24–25.
19. 3 Nephi 9:2.
20. See Genesis 4:7; Moses 5:23.
21. 2 Nephi 2:26.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 95:6.
23. See 2 Nephi 1:13.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
25. 2 Nephi 2:27.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.

Bishop H. David Burton

Last evening Sister Burton and I were enjoying a little Chinese food. Embedded in my fortune cookie was the message, “The stress you are experiencing will soon be relieved.” True story.

Bearing one another’s burdens

A group of men were talking with the Prophet Joseph Smith one day when news arrived that the house of a poor brother who lived some distance from town was burned down. Everyone expressed sorrow for what had happened. The Prophet listened for a moment, then “put his hand in his pocket, took out five dollars and said, ‘I feel sorry for this brother to the amount of five dollars; how much do you all feel sorry?’”¹ The immediacy of the Prophet’s response is significant. Last year millions of you responded to the sorrow of others with your means, tender hearts, and helping hands. Thank you for your wonderful measure of generosity.

Compassion for others has always been a fundamental characteristic of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The prophet Alma said:

“Ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”²

The Savior asks us to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”³

I have witnessed firsthand the commitment of Latter-day Saints and others not of our faith who have tender hearts and helping hands, who “bear . . . one another’s burdens.”⁴ I have been deeply sor-

rowed as I have seen massive devastation and visited victims who are without hope.

Relief for tsunami victims

In recent years, Mother Nature has displayed her vengeance and supremacy in unusual and powerful ways. Late December 2004 brought a terrible earthquake off the coast of Indonesia creating a deadly tsunami that killed thousands and shattered the lives of those who remained behind. Under the direction of local priesthood leaders and adult missionary couples, help was mobilized immediately, providing urgent assistance to hospitals, first responders, and communities in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand.

Within a short time, several Church members traveled to one of the hardest-hit areas—Aceh region in northern Sumatra. Sister Bertha Suranto, a district Young Women president from Jakarta, Indonesia, and her associates drove trucks filled with needed items that would save lives and provide comfort to those who had lost so much.

“Every time we came into a village,” Bertha said, “the people surrounded us and offered food to distribute—even when they only had a little rice and some fish they had caught in the ocean. From the mosques, community leaders announced that another donation from the Jesus church had arrived.”

As immediate needs were met, longer-term projects were undertaken. Plans to assist in building well over a thousand permanent houses and restoring hospitals and schools are being implemented. Villagers were assisted in replacing fishing boats and nets. Looms and sewing machines were

distributed to help families return to self-reliance.

Help for earthquake and flood victims

Northern Pakistan and India experienced the strongest earthquake in the region in a hundred years, with thousands of lives lost and many left without homes. Because of the extreme winters in the area, concern was extended not only for the injured but also for those left without shelter.

Four days after the earthquake, the Islamic Relief Agency provided a Boeing 747 cargo plane, which was quickly filled to capacity with blankets, tents, hygiene kits, medical supplies, sleeping bags, coats, and tarps from the bishops' storehouse. Large containers with more supplies and winter tents for over 75,000 people were shipped by air, land, and sea.

When floods hit Central America, meetinghouses were opened to provide temporary shelter for evacuees. In areas where vehicles couldn't go, Church members strapped supplies upon their backs and walked over flooded streams and treacherous terrain to bring relief to those in distress.

Refugee aid and measles vaccinations

Following a period of civil unrest in the Sudan, more than a million people have fled their homes and villages, seeking safety. Many refugees walked hundreds of miles through unfriendly terrain to arrive at refugee camps, seeking to reconnect with their families and regain their health.

Atmit, a vitamin-fortified porridge that has proven effective in saving the lives of starving children and the elderly, was provided. Medical supplies and thousands of hygiene and newborn kits were also supplied.

The Church has joined with other prominent charitable organizations to

help vaccinate millions of African children in a campaign to eradicate measles. Two thousand faithful African Church members volunteered many hours in advertising, gathering children, and providing help as the shots were given.

Relief for areas hit by hurricanes

The 2005 hurricane season in the southern United States and the western Caribbean was the costliest and most devastating on record. Storm after storm lashed at homes and businesses from Honduras to Florida. Thousands of priesthood-directed volunteers were there each time a hurricane struck, providing the necessities to sustain life. Hygiene and cleaning kits, food, water, kitchen sets, bed linen, and other commodities helped clean homes and establish temporary housing.

Brother Michael Kagle took a convoy of trucks loaded with equipment from his own company to Mississippi. Many employees, who are not of our faith, volunteered to go with him every weekend to give assistance in the storm-stricken areas. Walkie-talkies were used for communication along the way. Mike's high priests group leader, while driving along with them in his pickup truck, said he had white knuckles from driving so fast. Trying to slow the convoy down, he got on the walkie-talkie and said, "Gentlemen, do you realize we are going 80 miles per hour?" One of the truck drivers came on and said, "Well, you have to understand that's all these big trucks will do. We can't go any faster."

Gratitude for members' efforts

Hundreds of letters of gratitude have been received. One woman, a nurse from Mississippi, wrote: "I was speechless. Had God answered my prayers so quickly? Tears immediately began to roll down my cheeks as men in hard hats and boots, with chain saws of all shapes and sizes, ap-

peared out of the debris. It was absolutely, unequivocally, one of the most supreme sacrifices that has ever happened to me personally.”

May I express thanks to the nimble fingers that have produced thousands of beautiful blankets and a special thanks to the not-so-nimble fingers of our more senior sisters who have also crafted the much-needed quilts. One 92-year-old great-grandmother has produced several hundred blankets. In her case, both the creator and receiver have been blessed. As her son admired her handiwork, she asked, “Do you think anyone will ever use one of my blankets?” A letter from a young mother in Louisiana answers that question:

“I live in Louisiana, and I go to a local health unit for my children. While I was there, they gave me some outfits, diapers, wipes, and two beautiful baby blankets. One blanket has a yellow backing with footprints and handprints on the front, and the other blanket is tan with zebras. They are beautiful. My four-year-old loves the zebra one, and of course my seven-month-old can’t say much. I just wanted to say thank you to you and your Church members for your generosity. God bless you and your family.”

In response to the recent mud slides in the Philippines, the Saints in the area assembled hygiene kits and food boxes and distributed these with blankets to those in need.

Work and self-reliance taught

Welfare principles of work and self-reliance are maintained and taught as relief is given throughout the world. During 2005 many villages received clean water through new wells. Villagers were taught how to dig wells, install pumps, and make repairs when needed.

Training and equipment provided by local volunteers and ever-so-devoted missionary couples allow families to sup-

plement their diets with homegrown, nutritious food.

Many wheelchairs have been supplied that allow the disabled to become self-reliant. Thousands of medical personnel have been trained to save the lives of newborns. Medical professionals have performed cataract surgery, restoring the vision of many. Tender counseling has been provided worldwide by LDS Family Services.

Church reaches out to all people

Bridges of understanding and respect have been built in many nations as we collaborate with other established and trusted agencies.

Dr. Simbi Mubako, former African ambassador to the United States, has said, “The work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is all the more impressive because it is not limited to just the members of the Church, but it spreads to all human beings of different cultures and different religions because [they] see in every person the image of Jesus Christ.”

Our beloved President Gordon B. Hinckley has been instrumental in the development of this great humanitarian work. “We must reach out to all mankind,” he has said. “They are all sons and daughters of God our Eternal Father, and He will hold us accountable for what we do concerning them. . . . May we bless humanity with an outreach to all, lifting those who are downtrodden and oppressed, feeding and clothing the hungry and the needy, extending love and neighborliness to those about us who may not be part of this Church.”⁵

This modern-day humanitarian effort is a wonderful manifestation of the charity that burns within the souls of those whose hearts are tender and whose hands are ready to help. This selfless service truly demonstrates the pure love of Christ.

The Savior promises great blessings to those who give of themselves: “Give,

and it shall be given unto you. . . . For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”⁶

Church leaders express appreciation

The things I have spoken of today are not even a hundredth part of what is happening in villages and nations throughout the world. Everywhere I travel, expressions of profound gratitude are received. On behalf of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Church Welfare Executive Committee, whose assignment it is to guide this work, may I express our deepest appreciation and admiration.

It is impossible for me to find the words to adequately express the sacred feelings burning within my soul. The simple word *thanks* seems almost trite. To each of you whose tender hearts and help-

ing hands have eased the burdens of so many, please accept my heartfelt gratitude. I invoke the Lord’s choicest blessings to be with you and your families as you continue to remember those with heavy hearts and hands that hang down, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Andrew Workman, in “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor*, Oct. 15, 1892, 641.
2. Mosiah 18:8–9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
4. Galatians 6:2.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 4–5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 6.
6. Luke 6:38.

The choir and congregation sang
“Now Let Us Rejoice.”

Sister Julie B. Beck

The priesthood is woven into our lives

In Kirtland, when the remaining priesthood keys were restored, the Lord said, “This is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people.”¹ I am grateful for the outpouring of blessings that has come to each of us through the priesthood of God. By the power of the priesthood, this world and everything in it, including each of us, were created. The priesthood is intricately woven into who we are and have ever been.² As sons and daughters of God, we each have unique responsibilities and roles, and through the blessings of the priesthood, we are all given equal partnership, gifts, and blessings.

Last fall our oldest granddaughter was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church. After she received the Holy Ghost, her newest sister was blessed and given a name. The following month, an-

other new granddaughter was named and blessed. Since then I have reflected often on the privileges those little girls enjoy because the priesthood of God has been restored.

I hope our granddaughters and grandsons grow up knowing that they are not and have never been third-party observers of the priesthood. The blessings of the priesthood, which “are available to men and women alike,”³ are woven in and through and around their lives. Each of them is blessed by sacred ordinances, and each of them can enjoy the blessings of spiritual gifts by virtue of the priesthood.

Priesthood ordinances bless members

All faithful members of the Lord’s Church are equally blessed by priesthood ordinances. The first ordinance⁴ in a child’s life usually takes place when he or she is a baby and is given a name and a blessing.

When children reach the age of accountability, they are baptized. There is not a separate baptism for boys and girls. The same baptismal ordinance is performed for a young girl and a young boy, who are baptized in the same font. When those children are confirmed and receive the Holy Ghost, the same power is given to each of them. They qualify for the help of that holy power through their faithfulness and not in any other way.

As members of the Church, we are equal before the Lord as we partake of the sacrament. Through our faith in Jesus Christ and the power of His Atonement made possible because of that ordinance, we can all repent and become better.

Each of us is equally entitled to a priesthood blessing when we are sick or need added support from the Lord in our lives. A young woman who desires a patriarchal blessing is equally entitled to know her lineage and potential as a young man her same age. The blessings that come to each of them through Abraham are powerful and important.

We teach all young men and young women to prepare to go to the temple so they can “receive the blessings of [the] fathers that [they] may be entitled to the highest blessings of the priesthood.”⁵ When one of my nieces received her temple endowment a few months ago, she exclaimed with joy: “I made it! All of my life I have been taught about preparing for the temple, and I made it!”

Every man and woman who is willing to serve the Lord and can qualify for a temple recommend makes covenants of obedience and sacrifice. Each is endowed “with power from on high.”⁶

Every elder and sister who receives a mission call is set apart to do the Lord’s work, and each is given authority to preach the gospel of Christ.

A man and a woman who enter into the full partnership of a covenant temple marriage share equally in the blessings of that covenant if they are faithful.⁷ The

Lord has said that their covenant will be in force after this life, and together they are promised power and exaltation.⁸

President Ezra Taft Benson said, “When our children obey the Lord and go to the temple to receive their blessings and enter into the marriage covenant, they enter into the same *order of the priesthood* that God instituted in the very beginning with father Adam.”⁹

I saw the power of priesthood blessings when I visited a family where the young father lay dying. Surrounding him were his wife and beautiful daughters. On each wall of that room was at least one picture of the family or the temple. The mother testified of their blessings when she said: “We are empowered and protected by our covenants. Our family will endure forever. The Lord is watching over us, and we are not alone.” All faithful members are equally blessed by the outpouring of blessings they receive through priesthood ordinances.

The blessings of spiritual gifts

Because the priesthood has been restored, we also share equally in the blessings of spiritual gifts. The Lord gives us these gifts for our own benefit¹⁰ and to help each other.¹¹

Moroni said that “there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

“For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom;

“And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

“And to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.”¹²

As I have tried to learn Spanish and remember Portuguese (which I knew as a child), I have prayed for and felt the help

of the Lord as I communicate in those tongues. I have heard other Church leaders and missionaries bear powerful testimonies in languages they have barely studied. I know people who are given the spiritual gift of a believing spirit. When they hear the gospel, it rings true in their hearts. I know others who are given the gift of wisdom or the ability to use knowledge in righteous ways. Some have the ability to work miracles, some are gifted healers, and others have great discernment.¹³

When I was a little girl, I often experienced serious illness. My father was always willing and worthy to use the priesthood power he held to bless me. But I have also felt that my mother's special gifts contributed to my healing. She was truly gifted in her ability to minister to my needs and help me get well. Her great faith that the Lord would lead her to answers about medical treatment was a comfort to me. How blessed I was to have two parents who lovingly used their spiritual gifts.

President Wilford Woodruff said that "it is the privilege of every man and woman in this kingdom to enjoy the spirit of prophecy, which is the Spirit of God; and to the faithful it reveals such things as are necessary for their comfort and consolation, and to guide them in their daily duties."¹⁴

The blessings of the priesthood make it possible for every person who is set apart to serve in any office in the Lord's Church to receive "authority, responsibility, and blessings connected with the office."¹⁵

Spiritual gifts are numerous and varied and come to us as we seek them and use them appropriately. We enjoy them because of the power of the Holy Ghost, which is in and around and woven through our lives.¹⁶

Priesthood blessings serve as equalizer

Through the blessings of the priesthood, the Lord shows us that He is "no

respector of persons."¹⁷ In my travels, I usually have the chance to visit members in their homes. Some of those homes are very basic dwellings. At first I would say to myself: "Why am I blessed with a house that has electricity and plumbing when this family does not even have water near their home? Does the Lord love them less than He loves me?"

Then one day I sat in a temple next to a sister who lives in a humble house. I spent two hours at her side. I looked often into her beautiful eyes and saw the love of the Lord in them. As we finished our work in the temple, I had a powerful realization. In all of the eternal blessings, in all of our most important privileges and opportunities, we were equals. I had been "baptized unto repentance,"¹⁸ and so had she. I had spiritual gifts, and so did she. I had the opportunity to repent, and so did she. I had received the Holy Ghost, and so had she. I had received temple ordinances, and so had she. If both of us had left this world together at that moment, we would have arrived equal before the Lord in our blessings and potential.

Priesthood blessings are the great equalizer. Those blessings are the same for men and women, for boys and girls; they are the same for married and single, rich and poor, for the intellectual and the illiterate, for the well-known and the obscure.

I am grateful that through the infinite fairness and love of God, all men and women were given equal partnership, gifts, blessings, and potential through priesthood ordinances and spiritual gifts. Because of the priesthood, which is woven in and around and through our lives, every power, every covenant we need to do our life's work and walk back to our heavenly home has been poured out upon our heads. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 110:10.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:36–45; Abraham 3.

3. Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 26; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 26.
4. See *Family Guidebook* (2001), 19.
5. Ezra Taft Benson, "What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple," *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 10.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 95:8.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–2.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
9. *Ensign*, Aug. 1985, 10.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:26.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:12.
12. Moroni 10:8–11.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:10–26.
14. *Deseret News*, July 30, 1862, 33.
15. Boyd K. Packer, "What Every Elder Should Know—and Every Sister as Well: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government," *Ensign*, Feb. 1993, 10.
16. See Moroni 10:7–17.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 38:16.
18. Alma 9:27.

The choir sang "For the Beauty of the Earth."

Elder Henry B. Eyring

A rock of safety in perilous times

The prophets of God have foreseen the times in which we live. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."¹ Anyone with eyes to see the signs of the times and ears to hear the words of prophets knows that the peril is great. The peril comes from the forces of wickedness. Those forces are increasing. And so it will become harder, not easier, to keep the covenants we must make to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For those of us who are concerned about such a future for ourselves and for those we love—in our families, in our quorums, and in our classes—there is hope in the promise the Lord has given us of a place of safety in the storms ahead. Here is a word picture of that place. You have read about it in scripture. It has been repeatedly described by living prophets. A loving father told his sons of it this way as he tried to strengthen them against the storms of temptation:

"And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty

winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation . . . whereon if men build they cannot fall."²

King Benjamin's last sermon

It has never been more important than it is now to understand how to build on that sure foundation. For me, there is no better place to look than in the last sermon of King Benjamin recorded in the Book of Mormon. Most of us have read it again recently and have pondered it more than once. King Benjamin could see us and our descendants. He knew by prophetic power what we face. He knew from his own experience the terrors of war. He had defended his people in combat, relying on the power of God. He saw clearly the terrible powers of Lucifer to tempt and to overcome us.

He was a great and a holy man. And he knew how to invite people to build on that rock of safety as well as any of the Lord's prophets.

A warning against ignoring peril

He started in his discourse where we must all begin to help people escape spiritual disaster. People have to believe that the danger is real to want to find safety. They have to fear the consequence of ignoring the peril. He made clear the hazards we face because we are free to choose between right and wrong and because we cannot avoid the consequence of those choices. He spoke directly and sharply because he knew what sorrow would come to those who might not hear and heed his warnings.

Here is how he described the consequences which follow our choice either to follow the prompting of the Spirit of Christ or to follow the evil messages which come from Satan, whose purpose is to tempt us and trap us into sin:

“For behold, there is a wo pronounced upon him who listeth to obey that [evil] spirit; for if he listeth to obey him, and remaineth and dieth in his sins, the same drinketh damnation to his own soul; for he receiveth for his wages an everlasting punishment, having transgressed the law of God contrary to his own knowledge. . . .

“Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.”

King Benjamin went on: “O, all ye old men, and also ye young men, and you little children who can understand my words, for I have spoken plainly unto you that ye might understand, I pray that ye should awake to a remembrance of the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression.”³

For me, the power of that warning is the picture it forms in my mind of that

time when we will each stand before the Savior after this life to be judged. When King Benjamin speaks to me of shrinking from the presence of the Lord, it puts fear into my heart. I can see myself standing in that day of judgment before the glorified and resurrected Savior. I want with all my heart not to shrink, but rather to look up at Him and see Him smile and say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter in.”⁴

Becoming as a child

King Benjamin makes it clear how we can earn the hope to hear those words if we find the way in this life to have our natures changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That is the only way we can build on the sure foundation and so stand firm in righteousness during the storms of temptation.

King Benjamin describes that change with a beautiful comparison, used by prophets for millennia and by the Lord Himself. It is this: that we can, and we must, become as a child—a little child.

For some that will not be easy to understand or to accept. Most of us want to be strong. We may well see being like a child as being weak. Most parents have wanted their children at times to be less childish. Even the Apostle Paul used these words as he was about to urge us to incorporate charity, the pure love of Christ, into our lives: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”⁵

But King Benjamin, who understood as well as any mortal what it meant to be a man of strength and courage, makes it clear that to be like a child is not to be childish. It is to be like the Savior, who prayed to His Father for strength to be able to do His will and then did it. Our natures must be changed to become as a child to gain the strength we must have to be safe in the times of moral peril.

Here is King Benjamin's stirring description of what that change to become like a child is and how it comes to us:

"For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."⁶

We are safe on the rock which is the Savior when we have yielded in faith in Him, have responded to the Holy Spirit's direction to keep the commandments long enough and faithfully enough that the power of the Atonement has changed our hearts. When we have, by that experience, become as a child in our capacity to love and obey, we are on the sure foundation.

From King Benjamin we learn what we can do to take us to that safe place. But remember: the things we do are the means, not the end we seek. What we do allows the Atonement of Jesus Christ to change us into what we must be. Our faith in Jesus Christ brings us to repentance and to keeping His commandments. We obey and we resist temptation by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. In time our natures will change. We will become as a little child, obedient to God and more loving. That change, if we do all we must to keep it, will qualify us to enjoy the gifts which come through the Holy Ghost. Then we will be safe on the only sure rock.

Answers to humble, childlike prayers

Like you, I have felt what King Benjamin meant when he said that we could become like a little child before God. I have prayed, as you have, to know what to do when choices that I faced would have eternal consequences. Over many years I

have seen a recurring pattern in the times when the answers to such a prayer have come most clearly.

Once, for instance, I prayed through the night to know what I was to choose to do in the morning. I knew that no other choice could have had a greater effect on the lives of others and on my own. I knew what choice looked most comfortable to me. I knew what outcome I wanted. But I could not see the future. I could not see which choice would lead to which outcome. So the risk of being wrong seemed too great to me.

I prayed, but for hours there seemed to be no answer. Just before dawn, a feeling came over me. More than at any time since I had been a child, I felt like one. My heart and my mind seemed to grow very quiet. There was a peace in that inner stillness.

Somewhat to my surprise, I found myself praying, "Heavenly Father, it doesn't matter what I want. I don't care anymore what I want. I only want that Thy will be done. That is all that I want. Please tell me what to do."

In that moment I felt as quiet inside as I had ever felt. And the message came, and I was sure who it was from. It was clear what I was to do. I received no promise of the outcome. There was only the assurance that I was a child who had been told what path led to whatever He wanted for me.

I learned from that experience and countless repetitions that the description of the Holy Ghost as a still, small voice is real. It is poetic, but it is not poetry. Only when my heart has been still and quiet, in submission like a little child, has the Spirit been clearly audible to my heart and mind.

Knowing and loving the Lord

King Benjamin taught us how those moments may come more often, which they must in the perils we face. He told us

that there are things we can and must do to invite the blessing of that change to a childlike heart.

All of them have to do with doing what it takes to build greater faith in Jesus Christ and so qualify for the help of the Holy Ghost. King Benjamin gave the reason for that:

“And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.”⁷

What we need is faith in Him and to love Him. We must know that He lives and who He is. When we do, we will love Him. King Benjamin suggested how to know Him in these words, which you have heard often:

“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”⁸

We come to love those we serve. If we choose to begin to serve the Master out of even a glimmer of faith, we will begin to know Him. We will come to know His purposes for the people we serve for Him. Even when they do not accept our offer to serve them, we will feel His appreciation if we persist.

As we persist, we will feel the need for the influence of the Holy Ghost because our task will seem beyond us. Our humble prayer to our Heavenly Father will be answered. The Holy Ghost has as a major purpose witnessing that Jesus is the Christ. As we plead for help in His service, the Holy Ghost will come and confirm our faith in Him. Our faith in the Savior will increase. And, as we continue to serve Him, we will come to love Him. To be called to serve is a call to come to love the Master we serve. It is a call to have our natures changed.

The need to guard against sin

To keep the blessing of that change in our hearts will require determination, effort, and faith. King Benjamin taught at least some of what that will require. He said that to retain a remission of our sins from day to day we must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and help people spiritually and temporally.⁹ He warned that we must guard against even the feelings of contention entering into our hearts.¹⁰ He made it clear that the mighty change which comes through the Atonement working in us can diminish if we are not on guard against sin. The Lord said in warning, “Therefore let the church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation; yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also.”¹¹

Through sin the gift can be lost. King Benjamin taught that we are responsible for the determined effort necessary to resist temptation. He warned his people about specific temptations. But after giving those warnings, he put the obligation on them. As often as we pray not to be overcome by temptation and to be delivered from evil, we are responsible for ourselves. Here are the words he spoke, which are not his, but from God:

“And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

“But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.”¹²

With the help of the Holy Ghost, we can watch over ourselves. We can pray to

recognize and reject the first thoughts of sin. We can pray to recognize a warning not to speak words which would hurt or tempt someone else. And we can, when we must, pray for the humility and the faith to repent.

The Savior helps us overcome weaknesses

There will surely be some who hear my voice who will have this thought come into their minds: “But the temptations are too great for me. I have resisted as long as I can. For me, the commandments are too hard. The standard is too high.”

That is not so. The Savior is our Advocate with the Father. He knows our weaknesses. He knows how to succor those who are tempted.¹³

I bear you my witness that the Savior lives and that He is the sure foundation. I know that by acting on our faith in Him we can be cleansed and changed to become pure and strong, as a little child. I bear you my testimony that the Holy Ghost can lead us to truth and away from sin.

Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. The Book of Mormon is the word of God and a witness of Jesus Christ as our Savior. This is the true Church. I know that we can choose the promised joy of eternal life, however perilous the times.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Timothy 3:1.
2. Helaman 5:12.
3. Mosiah 2:33, 38, 40.
4. See Matthew 25:21.
5. 1 Corinthians 13:11.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Mosiah 3:17.
8. Mosiah 5:13.
9. See Mosiah 4:26.
10. See Mosiah 2:32.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 20:33–34.
12. Mosiah 4:29–30.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 62:1.

The choir sang “Consider the Lilies.”

President Faust

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session of the conference.

Following President Monson’s remarks, the choir will sing “High on the Mountain Top.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Presidency of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President Thomas S. Monson

Object lesson of the *maka-feke*

Many years ago, on an assignment to the beautiful islands of Tonga, I was privileged to visit our Church school, the Liahona High School, where our youth are taught by teachers with a common bond of faith—providing training for the mind and preparation for life. On that occasion,

entering one classroom, I noticed the rapt attention the children gave their native instructor. His textbook and theirs lay closed upon the desks. In his hand he held a strange-appearing fishing lure fashioned from a round stone and large seashells. This, I learned, was a *maka-feke*, an octopus lure. In Tonga, octopus meat is a delicacy.

The teacher explained that Tongan fishermen glide over a reef, paddling their outrigger canoes with one hand and dangling the maka-feke over the side with the other. An octopus dashes out from its rocky lair and seizes the lure, mistaking it for a much-desired meal. So tenacious is the grasp of the octopus and so firm is its instinct not to relinquish the precious prize, that fishermen can flip it right into the canoe.

It was an easy transition for the teacher to point out to the eager and wide-eyed youth that the evil one—even Satan—has fashioned so-called maka-fekes with which to ensnare unsuspecting persons and take possession of their destinies.

Maka-fekes of the evil one

Today we are surrounded by the maka-fekes which the evil one dangles before us and with which he attempts to entice us and then to ensnare us. Once grasped, such maka-fekes are ever so difficult—and sometimes nearly impossible—to relinquish. To be safe, we must recognize them for what they are and then be unwavering in our determination to avoid them.

Immorality

Constantly before us is the maka-feke of immorality. Almost everywhere we turn, there are those who would have us believe that what was once considered immoral is now acceptable. I think of the scripture, “Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.”¹ Such is the maka-feke of immorality. We are reminded in the Book of Mormon that chastity and virtue are precious above all things.

When temptation comes, remember the wise counsel of the Apostle Paul, who declared, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:

but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”²

Pornography

Next, the evil one also dangles before us the maka-feke of pornography. He would have us believe that the viewing of pornography really hurts no one. How applicable is Alexander Pope’s classic *An Essay on Man*:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.³

Some publishers and printers prostitute their presses by printing millions of pieces of pornography each day. No expense is spared to produce a product certain to be viewed, then viewed again. One of the most accessible sources of pornography today is the Internet, where one can turn on a computer and instantly have at his fingertips countless sites featuring pornography. President Gordon B. Hinckley has said:

“I fear this may be going on in some of your homes. It is vicious. It is lewd and filthy. It is enticing and habit forming. It will take [you] down to destruction as surely as anything in this world. It is foul sleaze that makes its exploiters wealthy, its victims impoverished.”⁴

Tainted as well is the movie producer, the television programmer, or the entertainer who promotes pornography. Long gone are the restraints of yesteryear. So-called realism is the quest, with the result that today we are surrounded by this filth.

Avoid any semblance of pornography. It will desensitize the spirit and erode the conscience. We are told in the Doctrine and Covenants, “That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.”⁵ Such is pornography.

Drugs

I mention next the maka-feke of drugs, including alcohol. Once grasped, this maka-feke is particularly difficult to abandon. Drugs and alcohol cloud thinking, remove inhibitions, fracture families, shatter dreams, and shorten life. They are everywhere to be found and are placed purposely in the pathway of vulnerable youth.

Each one of us has a body that has been entrusted to us by a loving Heavenly Father. We have been commanded to care for it. Can we deliberately abuse or injure our bodies without being held accountable? We cannot! The Apostle Paul declared: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”⁶ May we keep our bodies—our temples—fit and clean, free from harmful substances which destroy our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Excessive debt

The final maka-feke I wish to mention today is one which can crush our self-esteem, ruin relationships, and leave us in desperate circumstances. It is the maka-feke of excessive debt. It is a human tendency to want the things which will give us prominence and prestige. We live in a time when borrowing is easy. We can purchase almost anything we could ever want just by using a credit card or obtaining a loan. Extremely popular are home equity loans, where one can borrow an amount of money equal to the equity he has in his home. What we may not realize is that a home equity loan is equivalent to a second mortgage. The day of reckoning *will* come if we have continually lived beyond our means.

My brothers and sisters, avoid the philosophy that yesterday’s luxuries have become today’s necessities. They aren’t

necessities unless we make them so. Many enter into long-term debt, only to find that changes occur: people become ill or incapacitated, companies fail or downsize, jobs are lost, natural disasters befall us. For many reasons, payments on large amounts of debt can no longer be made. Our debt becomes as a Damocles sword hanging over our heads and threatening to destroy us.

I urge you to live within your means. One cannot spend more than one earns and remain solvent. I promise you that you will then be happier than you would be if you were constantly worrying about how to make the next payment on non-essential debt. In the Doctrine and Covenants we read: “Pay the debt thou hast contracted. . . . Release thyself from bondage.”⁷

Beware the pitfalls

There are, of course, countless other maka-fekes which the evil one dangles before us to lead us from the path of righteousness. However, our Heavenly Father has given us life and with it the capacity to think, to reason, and to love. We have the power to resist any temptation and the ability to determine the path we will take, the direction we will travel. Our goal is the celestial kingdom of God. Our purpose is to steer an undeviating course in that direction.

To all who walk the pathway of life, our Heavenly Father cautions: beware the detours, the pitfalls, the traps. Cunningly positioned are those cleverly disguised maka-fekes beckoning us to grasp them and to lose that which we most desire. Do not be deceived. Pause to pray. Listen to that still, small voice which speaks to the depths of our souls the Master’s gentle invitation, “Come, follow me.”⁸ By doing so, we turn from destruction, from death, and find happiness and life everlasting.

The fall of Cardinal Wolsey

Yet there are those who do not hear, who will not obey, who listen to the enticings of the evil one, who grasp those makafekes until they cannot let go, until all is lost. I think of that person of power, that cardinal of the cloth, even Cardinal Wolsey. The prolific pen of William Shakespeare described the majestic heights, the pinnacle of power to which Cardinal Wolsey ascended. That same pen told how principle was eroded by vain ambition, by expediency, by a clamor for prominence and prestige. Then came the tragic descent, the painful lament of one who had gained everything, then lost it all.

To Cromwell, his faithful servant, Cardinal Wolsey speaks:

O Cromwell, Cromwell!
Had I but served my God with half the
zeal
I served my king, He would not in mine
age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.⁹

That inspired mandate which would have led Cardinal Wolsey to safety was ruined by the pursuit of power and prominence, the quest for wealth and position. Like others before him and many more yet to follow, Cardinal Wolsey fell.

The faithfulness of Daniel

In an earlier time and by a wicked king, a servant of God was tested. Aided by the inspiration of heaven, Daniel interpreted to King Belshazzar the writing on the wall. Concerning the proffered rewards—even a royal robe and a necklace of gold—Daniel said, “Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another.”¹⁰

Darius, a later king, also honored Daniel, elevating him to the highest position of prominence. There followed the

envy of the crowd, the jealousy of princes, and the scheming of ambitious men.

Through trickery and flattery, King Darius signed a proclamation providing that anyone who made a request of any god or man, except the king, should be thrown into the lions’ den. Prayer was forbidden. In such matters, Daniel took direction not from an earthly king but from the King of heaven and earth, his God. Overtaken in his daily prayers, Daniel was brought before the king. Reluctantly, the penalty was pronounced. Daniel was to be thrown into the lions’ den.

I love the biblical account which follows:

“The king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

“And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice . . . , O Daniel, . . . is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

“Then said Daniel unto the king, . . .

“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me. . . .

“Then was the king exceeding glad. . . . Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.”¹¹

In a time of critical need, Daniel’s determination to remain true and faithful provided divine protection and a sanctuary of safety.

The clock of history, like the sands of the hourglass, marks the passage of time. A new cast occupies the stage of life. The problems of our day loom ominously before us. Surrounded by the challenges of modern living, we look heavenward for that unfailing sense of direction, that we might chart and follow a wise and proper course. Our Heavenly Father will not deny our petition.

Gustav and Margarete Wacker

When I think of righteous individuals, the names of Gustav and Margarete Wacker come readily to mind. Let me describe them. I first met the Wackers when I was called to preside over the Canadian Mission in 1959. They had immigrated to Kingston, Ontario, Canada, from their native Germany.

Brother Wacker earned his living as a barber. His means were limited, but he and Sister Wacker always paid more than a tenth as tithing. As branch president, Brother Wacker started a missionary fund, and for months at a time he was the only contributor. When there were missionaries in the city, the Wackers fed and cared for them, and the missionaries never left the Wacker home without some tangible donation to their work and welfare.

Gustav and Margarete Wacker's home was a heaven. They were not blessed with children, but they mothered and fathered their many Church visitors. Men and women of learning and sophistication sought out these humble, unlettered servants of God and counted themselves fortunate if they could spend an hour in their presence. The Wackers' appearance was ordinary, their English halting and somewhat difficult to understand, their home unpretentious. They didn't own a car or a television, nor did they do any of the things to which the world usually pays attention. Yet the faithful beat a path to their door in order to partake of the spirit that was there.

In March of 1982, Brother and Sister Wacker were called to serve as full-time ordinance workers in the Washington D.C. Temple. On June 29, 1983, while Brother and Sister Wacker were still serving in this temple assignment, Brother Wacker, with his beloved wife at his side, peacefully passed from mortality to his eternal reward. Fitting are the words, "Who honors God, God honors."¹²

Follow straight path to Heavenly Father

My brothers and sisters, let us resolve here and now to follow that straight path which leads home to the Father of us all so that the gift of eternal life—life in the presence of our Heavenly Father—may be ours. Should there be those things which need to be changed or corrected in order to do so, I encourage you to take care of them now.

In the words of a familiar hymn, may we ever be

True to the faith that our parents
have cherished,
True to the truth for which martyrs
have perished,
To God's command,
Soul, heart, and hand,
Faithful and true we will ever stand.¹³

That each of us may do so is my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 15:20; see also Isaiah 5:20.
2. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
3. In John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 14th ed. (1968), 409.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 68; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 51.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 50:23.
6. 1 Corinthians 3:16–17.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 19:35.
8. Luke 18:22.
9. *King Henry the Eighth*, act 3, scene 2, lines 455–58.
10. Daniel 5:17.
11. Daniel 6:19–23.
12. See 1 Samuel 2:30.
13. "True to the Faith," *Hymns*, no. 254.

The choir sang "High on the Mountain Top."

Elder Neil L. Andersen offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 176th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 1, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University. Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the second general session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by a combined choir from Brigham Young University, under the direction of Rosalind Hall, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Cecil O. Samuelson of the Seventy.

The choir sang "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr. offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Have I Done Any Good?"

Following the singing, the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church will be presented for sustaining vote. Brother Robert W. Cantwell, managing director of Church Auditing, will then read the Church Auditing Department Report. He will be followed by Brother F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency, who will present the Statistical Report of the Church for the year 2005.

The choir sang "Have I Done Any Good?"

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the

First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it by the uplifted hand. Those opposed may so manifest it, if any.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum:

Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, Henry B. Eyring, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, and David A. Bednar. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release the following as Area Seventies effective May 1, 2006:

Salvador Aguirre, Jose C. Aleson, Daniel P. Alvarez, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Yatyr M. Cesar, Robert M. Cowan, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, Franz R. Gaag, Daniel L. Johnson, Joel H. McKinnon, Marcus B. Nash, Armando A. Sierra, Jeffrey C. Swinton, Remus G. Villarete. All who wish to join us in expressing appreciation, please manifest it. Thank you.

It is proposed that we sustain as new members of the First Quorum of the Seventy Elders Keith K. Hilbig, David S. Baxter, Shayne M. Bowen, Daniel L. Johnson, Marcus B. Nash, and Anthony

D. Perkins, and as new members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy Elders Craig A. Cardon, Don R. Clarke, Keith R. Edwards, Stanley G. Ellis, and Larry W. Gibbons. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the following as new Area Seventies:

Jose L. Alonso, Vladimiro J. Campero, Juan A. Etchegaray, Hernan I. Herrera, David J. Hoare, César H. Hooker, Javier Ibañez, Daniel M. Jones, Stephen C. Kerr, Joni L. Koch, Daniel A. Moreno, Kent H. Murdock, J. Michel Paya, Stephen D. Posey, Carlos F. Rivas, Juan M. Rodriguez, Carlos Villanova. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

We shall now ask the newly called General Authorities to take their places on the stand.

Church Auditing Department Report for 2005

Robert W. Cantwell

To the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Dear Brethren: As prescribed by revelation in section 120 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Council on the Disposition of the Tithes authorizes the expenditure of Church funds. This council is composed of the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric. This council approves budgets for Church departments and

operations. After receiving the council's authorization, Church departments are to expend funds consistent with approved budgets and in accordance with Church policies and procedures.

The Church Auditing Department has been granted access to all records and systems necessary to evaluate the adequacy of controls over receipts of funds, expenditures, and safeguarding of Church assets. The Church Auditing Department is independent of all other Church departments and operations, and the staff

consists of certified public accountants, certified internal auditors, certified information systems auditors, and other credentialed professionals.

Based upon audits performed, the Church Auditing Department is of the opinion that, in all material respects, contributions received, expenditures made, and assets of the Church for the

year 2005 have been recorded and administered in accordance with appropriate accounting practices, approved budgets, and Church policies and procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

Church Auditing Department
Robert W. Cantwell
Managing Director

Church Statistical Report for 2005

F. Michael Watson

Brothers and sisters, the First Presidency has issued the following report concerning the growth and status of the Church as of December 31, 2005:

Number of Church units

Stakes	2,701
Missions	341
Districts	643
Wards and branches	27,087

Church membership

Total membership	12,560,869
Increase in children of record	
during 2005	93,150
Converts baptized during 2005	243,108

Missionaries

Full-time missionaries	52,060
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Temples

Temples dedicated during 2005	3
(San Antonio Texas, Aba Nigeria, Newport Beach California)	
Temples rededicated during 2005	1
(Apia Samoa)	
Temples in operation	122

Prominent Church members who have passed away since last April

Elder Rex C. Reeve, an emeritus General Authority; *Elder F. Arthur Kay*, a former member of the Seventy; *Elder Helvécio Martins*, a former member of the Seventy; *Sister Amelia Smith McConkie*, widow of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a former member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; *Sister Geniel Johnson Christensen*, wife of Elder Shirley D. Christensen of the Seventy.

President Monson

Thank you, brethren. We shall now be pleased to hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which we shall hear from Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation will then sing “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” Following the singing, we will hear from Elders David F. Evans and Wolfgang H. Paul of the Seventy. They will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

President Boyd K. Packer

Alma's rebuke of his son Corianton

My message is about a father and a son. Alma, the father, was a prophet; his son Corianton, a missionary.

Two of Alma's sons—Shiblon and Corianton, the youngest—were on a mission to the Zoramites. Alma was greatly disappointed at the failure of his son Corianton to live the standards of a missionary. Corianton forsook his ministry and went to the land of Siron after the harlot Isabel (see Alma 39:3).

"This was no excuse for thee, my son. Thou shouldst have tended to the ministry wherewith thou wast entrusted" (Alma 39:4).

Alma told his son that the devil had led him away (see Alma 39:11). Unchastity is "most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost" (Alma 39:5).

"I would to God that ye had not been guilty of so great a crime." He then said: "I would not dwell upon your crimes, to harrow up your soul, if it were not for your good. But behold, ye cannot hide your crimes from God" (Alma 39:7–8).

He sternly commanded his son to accept the counsel of his older brothers (see Alma 39:10).

Alma told him that his iniquity was great because it turned away investigators: "When they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words.

"And now the Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities" (Alma 39:11–12).

Alma teaches his son about Christ

After this severe rebuke, Alma the loving father became Alma the teacher.

He knew that "the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else" (Alma 31:5). So Alma taught Corianton.

He spoke first of Christ: "My son, I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ. Behold, I say unto you, that it is he that surely shall come to take away the sins of the world; yea, he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people" (Alma 39:15).

Corianton asked how they should know about the coming of Christ so far in advance.

Alma replied, "Is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming?" (Alma 39:17).

Alma's teachings on the Resurrection

Corianton was "worried concerning the resurrection of the dead" (Alma 40:1).

Alma had inquired of God concerning the Resurrection and told Corianton of the First Resurrection and of other resurrections. "There is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead" (Alma 40:4).

He had inquired as to "what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection" (Alma 40:7).

He then told Corianton, "All men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life" (Alma 40:11). The "righteous are received into a state of happiness" (Alma 40:12), and the evil are "led captive by the will of the devil" (Alma 40:13). The righteous remain "in paradise, until the time of their resurrection" (Alma 40:14).

"Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that

I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world” (Alma 34:34).

Alma told his son “that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works” (Alma 40:21).

“The soul”—that is, the spirit—“shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul” (Alma 40:23). “This,” he said, “is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets” (Alma 40:24). Alma said that “some have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing” (Alma 41:1).

Alma’s teachings on justice and mercy

Alma then said:

“And now, my son, I perceive there is somewhat more which doth worry your mind, which ye cannot understand—which is concerning the justice of God in the punishment of the sinner; for ye do try to suppose that it is injustice that the sinner should be consigned to a state of misery.

“Now behold, my son, I will explain this thing unto thee” (Alma 42:1–2).

He told Corianton about the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Adam and Eve: “And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will” (Alma 42:7).

“It was appointed unto man to die” (Alma 42:6).

He then explained why death is absolutely necessary: “If it were not for the plan of redemption, (laying it aside) as soon as they were dead their souls were

miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 42:11).

Alma taught Corianton about justice and mercy: “According to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men” (Alma 42:13).

He explained that “the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:15).

He taught Corianton about the unwavering standard of eternal law (see Alma 42:17–25).

He very bluntly explained why punishment was necessary: “Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul” (Alma 42:16).

Alma’s own experience with repentance

Alma knew personally the pain of punishment and the joy of repentance. He himself had once greatly disappointed his own father, Corianton’s grandfather. He rebelled and went about “seeking to destroy the church” (Alma 36:6). He was struck down by an angel, not because he deserved it but because of the prayers of his father and others (see Mosiah 27:14).

Alma felt the agony and guilt and said: “As I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on

me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

“Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy. . . .

“Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (Alma 36:17–21, 24).

Alma asked Corianton, “Do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice?” (Alma 42:25). He explained that because of the Atonement of Christ, both could be satisfied by eternal law.

Alma shows his son an increase of love

“Moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:43; see also Alma 39:12), he had rebuked Corianton with sharpness. Then, after plainly, patiently teaching these fundamental principles of the gospel, there came the abundance of love.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was taught through revelation that “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

“By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

“Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and

then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

“That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death” (D&C 121:41–44).

Alma said: “O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do you let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility” (Alma 42:30).

Corianton’s grandfather, also named Alma, was among the priests who had served the wicked King Noah. He heard Abinadi the prophet testify of Christ, and he was converted. Condemned to death, he fled the evil court to teach of Christ. (See Mosiah 17:1–4.)

Now Alma, in turn, was the father pleading with his son Corianton to repent.

After sternly rebuking his son and patiently teaching the doctrine of the gospel, Alma the loving father said, “And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance” (Alma 42:29).

In agony and shame, Corianton was brought “down to the dust in humility” (Alma 42:30).

Corianton sent back to the mission field

Alma, who was Corianton’s father and also his priesthood leader, was now satisfied with Corianton’s repentance. He lifted the terrible burden of guilt his son carried and sent him back to the mission field: “And now, O my son, ye are called of God to preach the word unto this people. . . . Go thy way, declare the word with truth and soberness. . . . And may God

grant unto you even according to my words” (Alma 42:31).

Corianton joined his brothers, Helaman and Shiblon, who were among the priesthood leaders. Twenty years later in the land northward, he was still faithfully laboring in the gospel. (See Alma 49:30; 63:10.)

Satan’s lie that sinners cannot repent

It is a wicked, wicked world in which we live and in which our children must find their way. Challenges of pornography, gender confusion, immorality, child abuse, drug addiction, and all the rest are everywhere. There is no way to escape from their influence.

Some are led by curiosity into temptation, then into experimentation, and some become trapped in addiction. They lose hope. The adversary harvests his crop and binds them down.

Satan is the deceiver, the destroyer, but his is a temporary victory.

The angels of the devil convince some that they are born to a life from which they cannot escape and are compelled to live in sin. The most wicked of lies is that they cannot change and repent and that they will not be forgiven. That cannot be true. They have forgotten the Atonement of Christ.

“For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him” (D&C 18:11).

Christ is the Creator, the Healer. What He made, He can fix. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the gospel of repentance and forgiveness (see 2 Nephi 1:13; 9:45; Jacob 3:11; Alma 26:13–14; Moroni 7:17–19).

“Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10).

Account of Alma and Corianton a type

The account of this loving father and a wayward son, drawn from the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, is a type, a pattern, an example.

Each of us has a loving Father in Heaven. Through the Father’s redeeming plan, those who may stumble and fall “are not cast off forever” (Book of Mormon title page).

“And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (D&C 18:13).

“The Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance; nevertheless” (D&C 1:31–32), the Lord said, “he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more” (D&C 58:42).

Could there be any more sweeter or more consoling words, more filled with hope, than those words from the scriptures? “I, the Lord, remember [their sins] no more” (D&C 58:42). That is the testimony of the Book of Mormon, and that is my testimony to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David A. Bednar

Companionship of the Holy Ghost

Today, I speak by way of reminder and admonition to those of us who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I pray for and invite the

Holy Ghost to now assist me and you as we learn together.

Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins “is the introductory ordinance of the gospel” of Jesus Christ and must be preceded by faith in the Savior and by sin-

cere and complete repentance. “Baptism in water . . . must be followed by baptism of the Spirit in order to be complete” (see Bible Dictionary, “Baptism,” 618). As the Savior taught Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). My message this afternoon focuses on the baptism of the Spirit and the blessings that flow from the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

The ordinance of and covenant associated with baptism

As each of us was baptized, we entered into a solemn covenant with our Heavenly Father. A covenant is an agreement between God and His children upon the earth, and it is important to understand that God determines the conditions of all gospel covenants. You and I do not decide the nature or elements of a covenant. Rather, exercising our moral agency, we accept the terms and requirements of a covenant as our Eternal Father has established them (see Bible Dictionary, “Covenant,” 651).

The saving ordinance of baptism must be administered by one who has proper authority from God. The fundamental conditions of the covenant into which we entered in the waters of baptism are these: we witnessed that we were willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, that we would always remember Him, and that we would keep His commandments. The promised blessing for honoring this covenant is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us* (see D&C 20:77). In other words, baptism by water leads to the authorized opportunity for the constant companionship of the third member of the Godhead.

Confirmation and the baptism of the Spirit

Following our baptism, each of us had hands placed upon our head by those with

priesthood authority and was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Holy Ghost was conferred upon us (see D&C 49:14). The statement “receive the Holy Ghost” in our confirmation was a directive to strive for the baptism of the Spirit.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost” (*History of the Church*, 5:499). We were baptized by immersion in water for the remission of sins. We must also be baptized by and immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, “and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 31:17).

As we gain experience with the Holy Ghost, we learn that the intensity with which we feel the Spirit’s influence is not always the same. Strong, dramatic spiritual impressions do not come to us frequently. Even as we strive to be faithful and obedient, there simply are times when the direction, assurance, and peace of the Spirit are not readily recognizable in our lives. In fact, the Book of Mormon describes faithful Lamanites who “were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not” (3 Nephi 9:20).

The influence of the Holy Ghost is described in the scriptures as “a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12; see also 3 Nephi 11:3) and a “voice of perfect mildness” (Helaman 5:30). Thus, the Spirit of the Lord usually communicates with us in ways that are quiet, delicate, and subtle.

Withdrawing ourselves from the Spirit of the Lord

In our individual study and classroom instruction, we repeatedly emphasize the importance of recognizing the inspiration and promptings we receive from the Spirit

of the Lord. And such an approach is correct and useful. We should seek diligently to recognize and respond to promptings as they come to us. However, an important aspect of baptism by the Spirit may frequently be overlooked in our spiritual development.

We should also endeavor to discern when we “withdraw [ourselves] from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in [us] to guide [us] in wisdom’s paths that [we] may be blessed, prospered, and preserved” (Mosiah 2:36). Precisely because the promised blessing is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*, we should attend to and learn from the choices and influences that separate us from the Holy Spirit.

The standard is clear. If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing. If that which is intended to entertain, for example, alienates us from the Holy Spirit, then certainly that type of entertainment is not for us. Because the Spirit cannot abide that which is vulgar, crude, or immodest, then clearly such things are not for us. Because we estrange the Spirit of the Lord when we engage in activities we know we should shun, then such things definitely are not for us.

I recognize we are fallen men and women living in a mortal world and that we might not have the presence of the Holy Ghost with us every second of every minute of every hour of every day. However, the Holy Ghost can tarry with us much, if not most, of the time—and certainly the Spirit can be with us more than it is not with us. As we become ever more immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, we should strive to recognize impressions when they come and the influences or events that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.

Taking “the Holy Spirit for [our] guide” (D&C 45:57) is possible and is essential for our spiritual growth and sur-

vival in an increasingly wicked world. Sometimes as Latter-day Saints we talk and act as though recognizing the influence of the Holy Ghost in our lives is the rare or exceptional event. We should remember, however, that the covenant promise is *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*. This supernal blessing applies to every single member of the Church who has been baptized, confirmed, and instructed to “receive the Holy Ghost.”

The Liahona as a type and shadow for our day

In our day the Book of Mormon is the primary source to which we should turn for help in learning how to invite the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. The description in the Book of Mormon of the Liahona, the director or compass used by Lehi and his family in their journey in the wilderness, specifically was included in the record as a type and a shadow for our day and as an essential lesson about what we should do to enjoy the blessings of the Holy Ghost.

As we strive to align our attitudes and actions with righteousness, then the Holy Ghost becomes for us today what the Liahona was for Lehi and his family in their day. The very factors that caused the Liahona to work for Lehi will likewise invite the Holy Ghost into our lives. And the very factors that caused the Liahona not to work anciently will likewise cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost today.

The Liahona: purposes and principles

As we study and ponder the purposes of the Liahona and the principles by which it operated, I testify that we will receive inspiration suited to our individual and family circumstances and needs. We can and will be blessed with ongoing direction from the Holy Ghost.

The Liahona was prepared by the Lord and given to Lehi and his family after they left Jerusalem and were traveling in the wilderness (see Alma 37:38; D&C 17:1). This compass or director pointed the way that Lehi and his caravan should go (see 1 Nephi 16:10), even “a straight course to the promised land” (Alma 37:44). The pointers in the Liahona operated “according to the faith and diligence and heed” (1 Nephi 16:28) of the travelers and failed to work when family members were contentious, rude, slothful, or forgetful (see 1 Nephi 18:12, 21; Alma 37:41, 43).

The compass also provided a means whereby Lehi and his family could obtain greater “understanding concerning the ways of the Lord” (1 Nephi 16:29). Thus, the primary purposes of the Liahona were to provide both direction and instruction during a long and demanding journey. The director was a physical instrument that served as an outward indicator of their inner spiritual standing before God. It worked according to the principles of faith and diligence.

Just as Lehi was blessed in ancient times, each of us in this day has been given a spiritual compass that can direct and instruct us during our mortal journey. The Holy Ghost was conferred upon you and me as we came out of the world and into the Savior’s Church through baptism and confirmation. By the authority of the holy priesthood we were confirmed as members of the Church and admonished to seek for the constant companionship of “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17).

As we each press forward along the pathway of life, we receive direction from the Holy Ghost just as Lehi was directed through the Liahona. “For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the

way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5).

The Holy Ghost operates in our lives precisely as the Liahona did for Lehi and his family, according to our faith and diligence and heed.

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. . . .

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth” (D&C 121:45–46).

And the Holy Ghost provides for us today the means whereby we can receive, “by small and simple things” (Alma 37:6), increased understanding about the ways of the Lord: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

Inviting the Holy Ghost into our lives

The Spirit of the Lord can be our guide and will bless us with direction, instruction, and spiritual protection during our mortal journey. We invite the Holy Ghost into our lives through meaningful personal and family prayer, feasting upon the words of Christ, diligent and exacting obedience, faithfulness and honoring of covenants, and through virtue, humility, and service. And we steadfastly should avoid things that are immodest, coarse, crude, sinful, or evil that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost.

We also invite the ongoing companionship of the Holy Ghost as we worthily partake of the sacrament each Sabbath day: “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (D&C 59:9).

Through the ordinance of the sacrament we renew our baptismal covenant and can receive and retain a remission of our sins (see Mosiah 4:12, 26). In addition, we are reminded on a weekly basis of the promise *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us*. As we then strive to keep ourselves clean and unspotted from the world, we become worthy vessels in whom the Spirit of the Lord can always dwell.

In February of 1847 the Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to Brigham Young in a dream or vision. President Young asked the Prophet if he had a message for the Brethren. The Prophet Joseph replied: “Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure to *keep* the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it

will yield the fruits of the kingdom” (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 41; italics added). Of all the truths the Prophet Joseph might have taught Brigham Young on that sacred occasion, he emphasized the importance of obtaining and keeping the Spirit of the Lord.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I testify of the living reality of God the Eternal Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. May each of us so live *that we may always have His Spirit to be with us* and thereby qualify for the blessings of direction, instruction, and protection that are essential in these latter days. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
“Come, Ye Children of the Lord.”

Elder David F. Evans

It has been a year since I was sustained in general conference. I am grateful for this year and for all that I have experienced. I love the Lord and am so very grateful for His sacrifice and for His gospel. I love President Hinckley and sustain him as the Lord’s prophet on the earth. Together with faithful Saints everywhere, I testify of prophets and apostles in our time and pledge my life to His cause.

Appreciation for missionaries

A few years ago, I was interviewing missionaries. A winter storm was blowing in as missionaries came and went throughout the day. The storm changed from icy rain to snow and back again. Some missionaries arrived by train from nearby cities and walked to the church through the storm. Others rode their bicycles. Almost without exception they were cheerful and happy. They were the Lord’s

missionaries. They had His Spirit and felt joy in His service regardless of their circumstances.

As each companionship concluded their interviews, I will never forget watching them go back out into the storm to preach the gospel and do what the Lord had called them to do. I could see their commitment and dedication. I could feel the love they had for the people and for the Lord. As I watched them leave, I felt an overwhelming love for them and for what they were doing.

Later that night I attended a priesthood meeting in the same city. The storm had continued and was now mostly snow. During the opening song, the branch president of the smallest and farthest branch and his two missionary counselors, Elder Warner and Elder Karpowitz, came into the chapel. As they got ready to sit down, these two wonderful missionaries took off their winter hats and gloves. They took off

their outer coats. Then they each took off a second winter coat and sat down. Like the missionaries earlier in the day, despite the weather these missionaries were happy. They felt the Spirit of the Lord in their lives. Through service in the Lord's cause, they felt a certain love and warmth and joy that are difficult to describe.

As I watched these great young missionaries that evening, I had a remarkable experience. In my mind's eye, I saw missionaries throughout the mission going out into that winter night. Some were knocking doors and facing rejection as they sought to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some were in homes or apartments teaching individuals and families. In spite of the conditions they faced, they were doing what they could to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who would listen, and they were happy. Into my heart came a feeling that I cannot fully explain.

By a wonderful gift of the Spirit, I felt His love, the pure love of Christ that He has for faithful missionaries everywhere, and it changed me forever. I understood how precious each missionary is to Him. I caught a glimpse of what prophets would describe as the "greatest generation of missionaries" the world has ever known (see M. Russell Ballard, in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 50; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 47). I began to understand why it was necessary to raise the bar so that missionaries everywhere would be entitled to the protection, direction, and happiness that accompany the Spirit of the Lord. I also began to understand why—as parents, bishops, stake presidents, and other leaders—we must do everything we can to help the young people of the Church become worthy of the blessings of missionary service.

President Hinckley's mission experience

President Hinckley described what happens to the heart of every missionary who commits his or her life and work to

the Lord when he talked about his own missionary experiences. It was early in his mission, and he was discouraged. The work was hard, and the people were not receptive. However, there came a time when discouragement turned to commitment. For him, the beginning was a letter from his father in which he read: "Dear Gordon, I have your letter. . . . I have only one suggestion: Forget yourself and go to work." In describing what happened next, he said: "I got on my knees in that little bedroom . . . and made a pledge that I would try to give myself unto the Lord.

"The whole world changed. The fog lifted. The sun began to shine in my life. I had a new interest. I saw the beauty of this land. I saw the greatness of the people. . . . Everything that has happened to me since that's been good I can trace to that decision made in that little house" (in Mike Cannon, "Missionary Theme Was Pervasive during Visit of President Hinckley," *Church News*, Sept. 9, 1995, 4).

President Hinckley continued by saying: "You want to be happy? Forget yourself and get lost in this great cause, and bend your efforts to helping people" (in *Church News*, Sept. 9, 1995, 4).

Invitation to missionary service

To every young man I would say, do you want to be happy? If so, come and join with us, 52,000 strong and counting, and serve your fellowman as a missionary for the Lord. Make the commitment to give two years of your life to the Lord. It will change everything. You will be happy. The fog will lift. You will come to love the culture and the people you are called to serve. The work will be difficult, but there will also be great satisfaction and joy as you serve. If you are faithful during your mission and thereafter, you will look back on your life and say with President Hinckley, "Everything that has happened to me since that's been good I can trace to that

decision to serve a mission and give my life to the Lord.”

President Hinckley has reminded us that it is not only young elders who are entitled to these blessings. Couples serve wonderfully and are needed so very much. While young sisters are not obligated to serve, the President has said: “We need some young women. They perform a remarkable work” (“To the Bishops of the Church,” *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 19, 2004, 27). We also know that there are some who, for health or other reasons, are honorably excused from service. We love them and know that our Heavenly Father will provide compensating blessings in their lives as they serve in other ways and live faithfully.

A year ago, Elder Ballard asked that parents, bishops, and branch presidents work together and help at least one more young man, in addition to those who would normally be prepared to serve, become worthy and be called from each ward and branch of the Church (see Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 72; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 71). Many have responded. As leaders, we should all recommit ourselves to following this inspired request.

Elder Evans’s mission experience

Brothers and sisters, many good bishops have been doing for a long time what Elder Ballard asked. Thirty-six years ago, Bishop Matheson called my home and invited me to his office. Because of world

circumstances, the number of missionaries any ward could send was limited, but an additional space had become available, and he had the responsibility to recommend one more missionary. He told me he and his counselors had been praying. He told me that he was impressed that now was the time that the Lord wanted me to serve my mission. I was stunned. Never before had anyone said to me that the Lord had something He wanted me to do. I felt the Spirit of the Lord testify to me that I should go and that I should go now. I said to the bishop, “If the Lord wants me to serve, then I will go.”

For me, everything changed. The fog really did lift, and happiness and joy came into my life. In one way or another, every good thing that has happened to me since that day has come because of the commitment made to serve the Lord and His children and give two years of my life in His service.

I say again: Come and join with us. Come and be clean. Come and be happy. Come and experience the very thing that the Lord has said is of “most worth” (D&C 15:6) to you at this time in your life. Come and be part of the greatest generation of missionaries the world has ever known.

This is the work of the Lord. Our Father in Heaven lives, and His Son, Jesus Christ, leads and directs this work today. Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Wolfgang H. Paul

Confusion about the meaning of freedom

Some time ago, as I was driving, I had to stop at a red light. The vehicle in front of me caught my attention. A sticker read, “I do what I want.”

I wondered why someone would choose to place such a statement on his

vehicle. What was the message he wanted to send? Perhaps the driver of this vehicle wanted to express publicly that he has achieved total freedom by just doing what he likes to do. As I thought about this, I realized that our world would be quite chaotic if everyone would just do what he or she wants to do.

It is obvious that there is some confusion in our society about this subject. In the media, advertisements, entertainment, and elsewhere, we find the idea widespread that when someone can do what he wants, he enjoys freedom and will be happy. It suggests that the only criteria for our decisions are what is pleasing to us, what is fun, or what matches our individual desires.

Freedom and Heavenly Father's plan

Our Heavenly Father has given us a better concept. It is His great plan of happiness, which gives us real freedom and happiness. We read in the Book of Mormon:

“And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

“Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”¹

When we came into this world, we brought with us from our heavenly home this God-given gift and privilege which we call our agency. It gives us the right and power to make decisions and to choose. Agency is an eternal law. President Brigham Young, speaking of our agency, taught:

“This is a law which has always existed from all eternity, and will continue to exist throughout all the eternities to

come. Every intelligent being must have the power of choice.”²

President Wilford Woodruff observed on the same subject: “This agency has always been the heritage of man under the rule and government of God. He possessed it in the heaven of heavens before the world was, and the Lord maintained and defended it there against the aggression of Lucifer and those that took sides with him. . . . By virtue of this agency you and I and all mankind are made responsible beings, responsible for the course we pursue, the lives we live, [and] the deeds we do.”³

Agency allows earth life to be a test

When the Lord taught Abraham about the eternal nature of spirits and that he was chosen before he was born, He explained one of the important purposes for coming to this earth by saying, “And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”⁴

Thus, our agency makes our life on this earth a test period. If we did not have this wonderful gift of agency, we would not be able to show our Father in Heaven whether we will do all that He commanded us.

In order for us to use our agency, we must have a knowledge of good and evil, we must have the freedom to make choices, and after we have exercised our agency, there must be consequences that follow our choices.

I have learned that as we obey our Heavenly Father's commandments, our faith increases, we grow in wisdom and spiritual strength, and it becomes easier for us to make right choices.

The Savior set example for use of agency

Our great example, the Lord Jesus Christ, set the perfect example for all of us

as to how to use our agency. In that Council in Heaven, when the plan of our Father was presented to us—that we would have the opportunity to come to this earth and receive a body—the Beloved Son, who was the Beloved and Chosen of the Father from the beginning, said to His Father, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”⁵

Likewise, we should make our choices using the same criteria. Instead of saying, “I do what I want,” our motto should be “I do what the Father wants me to do.”

If we do this, we can be certain that the blessings of the Lord will be upon us. It may well be that we have to make some of these choices when it is not convenient for us. I have learned, however, that although the time is sometimes not convenient for our schedule, nevertheless, if we make the right choice, the Lord will take care of us in His own way, which at that time is not yet known to us.

When we were transferred in 1989 from the Germany Hamburg Mission to East Germany to preside over the Dresden mission, the time was not convenient for our family. Our children had just adapted to their new school in Hamburg and now had to become acquainted with

the socialistic school system in East Germany. One child could not even come with us because she needed to finish school in the West. However, we have learned from this experience that what seemed to be hard for us in the beginning eventually turned into a great blessing for all of us. The Lord had His own way to take care of our challenges.

My dear brothers and sisters, I am so grateful for the wonderful gift of agency, which our Father in Heaven has given us. I am grateful to know that we are His children. I know from many of my own experiences that He loves us and that He cares for us. I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer. I know that the Prophet Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son and that he is the prophet of the Restoration. I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet of God today.

Of this I testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:26–27.
2. *Deseret News*, Oct. 10, 1866, 355.
3. *Millennial Star*, Oct. 14, 1889, 642.
4. Abraham 3:25.
5. Moses 4:2.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Nurturing marriage

My beloved brethren and sisters, thank you for your love of the Lord and His gospel. Wherever you live, your righteous lives provide good examples in these days of decaying morals and disintegrating marriages.

As we Brethren travel about the world, sometimes we see worrisome scenes. On a recent flight, I sat behind a husband and wife. She obviously loved her husband. As she stroked the back of his neck I could see her wedding ring. She would nestle

close to him and rest her head upon his shoulder, seeking his companionship.

In contrast, he seemed totally oblivious to her presence. He was focused solely upon an electronic game player. During the entire flight, his attention was riveted upon that device. Not once did he look at her, speak to her, or acknowledge her yearning for affection.

His inattention made me feel like shouting: “Open your eyes, man! Can’t you see? Pay attention! Your wife loves you! She needs you!”

I don't know more about them. I haven't seen them since. Perhaps I was alarmed unduly. And very possibly, if this man knew of my concern for them, he might feel sorry for me in not knowing how to use such an exciting toy.

But these things I do know: I know "that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children."¹ I know that the earth was created and that the Lord's Church was restored so that families could be sealed and exalted as eternal entities.² And I know that one of Satan's cunning methods of undermining the work of the Lord is to attack the sacred institutions of marriage and the family.

Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship. Yet some married couples fall short of their full potential. They let their romance become rusty, take each other for granted, allow other interests or clouds of neglect to obscure the vision of what their marriage really could be. Marriages would be happier if nurtured more carefully.

I realize that many mature members of the Church are not married. Through no failing of their own, they deal with the trials of life alone. Be we all reminded that in the Lord's own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints.³ For those who are now or will be married, I suggest two steps you can take to have a more joyful marriage.

I. Doctrinal foundation

The first step is to comprehend the doctrinal foundation for marriage. The Lord declared that marriage is the legal wedding of one man and one woman: "Marriage is ordained of God unto man.

"Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be

one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation."⁴

Worldly trends to define marriage in some other way would sadly serve to destroy the institution of marriage. Such schemes are contrary to the plan of God.

It was He who said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh."⁵

Scripture further reaffirms that "the man [is not] without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."⁶

Marriage is the foundry for social order, the fountain of virtue, and the foundation for eternal exaltation. Marriage has been divinely designated as an eternal and everlasting covenant.⁷ Marriage is sanctified when it is cherished and honored in holiness. That union is not merely between husband and wife; it embraces a partnership with God.⁸ "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other."⁹ Children born of that marital union are "an heritage of the Lord."¹⁰ Marriage is but the beginning bud of family life; parenthood is its flower. And that bouquet becomes even more beautiful when graced with grandchildren. Families may become as eternal as the kingdom of God itself.¹¹

Marriage is both a commandment and an exalting principle of the gospel.¹² Because it is ordained of God, the intimate physical expressions of married love are sacred. Yet all too commonly, these divine gifts are desecrated. If a couple allows lewd language or pornography to corrupt their intimacy, they offend their Creator while they degrade and diminish their own divine gifts. True happiness is predicated upon personal purity.¹³ Scripture commands: "Be ye clean."¹⁴ Marriage should ever be a covenant to lift husbands and wives to exaltation in celestial glory.

Marriage was intended by the Lord to endure beyond physical death. His plan offers eternal perpetuation of the family

in the kingdom of God. His plan provides temples and opportunities to officiate therein for the living and the dead. A marriage sealed there launches a husband and wife into that grand order of unity so necessary to the perfection of God's work.¹⁵

Doctrines related to marriage include individual agency and accountability. All of us are accountable for our choices. Couples blessed with children are accountable to God for the care they give to their children.

As I meet with priesthood leaders, I often ask about the priorities of their various responsibilities. Usually they mention their important Church duties to which they have been called. Too few remember their responsibilities at home. Yet priesthood offices, keys, callings, and quorums are meant to exalt families.¹⁶ Priesthood authority has been restored so that families can be sealed eternally. So brethren, your foremost priesthood duty is to nurture your marriage—to care for, respect, honor, and love your wife. Be a blessing to her and your children.

II. Strengthening marriage

With these doctrinal underpinnings in mind, let us consider the second step—specific actions that would strengthen a marriage. I will offer sample suggestions and invite each couple privately to ponder them and adapt them as needed to their own particular circumstances.

My suggestions use three action verbs: to *appreciate*, to *communicate*, and to *contemplate*.

To *appreciate*—to say “I love you” and “thank you”—is not difficult. But these expressions of love and appreciation do more than acknowledge a kind thought or deed. They are signs of sweet civility. As grateful partners look for the good in each other and sincerely pay compliments to one another, wives and husbands will strive to become the persons described in those compliments.

Suggestion number two—to *communicate* well with your spouse—is also important. Good communication includes taking time to plan together. Couples need private time to observe, to talk, and really listen to each other. They need to cooperate—helping each other as equal partners. They need to nurture their spiritual as well as physical intimacy. They should strive to elevate and motivate each other. Marital unity is sustained when goals are mutually understood. Good communication is also enhanced by prayer. To pray with specific mention of a spouse's good deed (or need) nurtures a marriage.

My third suggestion is to *contemplate*. This word has deep meaning. It comes from Latin roots: *con*, meaning “with,” and *templum*, meaning “a space or place to meditate.” It is the root from which the word *temple* comes. If couples contemplate often—with each other in the temple—sacred covenants will be better remembered and kept. Frequent participation in temple service and regular family scripture study nourish a marriage and strengthen faith within a family. Contemplation allows one to anticipate and to resonate (or be in tune) with each other and with the Lord. Contemplation will nurture both a marriage and God's kingdom. The Master said, “Seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”¹⁷

I invite each marital partner to consider these suggestions and then determine specific goals to nurture your own relationship. Begin with sincere desire. Identify those actions needed to bless your spiritual unity and purpose. Above all, do not be selfish! Generate a spirit of selflessness and generosity. Celebrate and commemorate each day together as a treasured gift from heaven.

President Harold B. Lee said “that the most important of the Lord's work you and I will ever do will be within the walls

of our own homes.”¹⁸ And President David O. McKay declared, “No other success can compensate for failure in the home.”¹⁹

When you as husband and wife recognize the divine design in your union—when you feel deeply that God has brought you to each other—your vision will be expanded and your understanding enhanced. Such feelings are expressed in words of a song that has long been a favorite of mine:

Because you come to me with naught
save love,
And hold my hand and lift mine eyes
above,
A wider world of hope and joy I see,
Because you come to me.
Because you speak to me in accents
sweet,
I find the roses waking round my feet,
And I am led through tears and joy to
thee,
Because you speak to me.
Because God made thee mine, I'll
cherish thee
Through light and darkness, through
all time to be,
And pray His love may make our love
divine,
Because God made thee mine.²⁰

That each marriage may be so nurtured is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102, paragraph 1.
2. Whenever scriptures warn that the “earth would be utterly wasted,” the warning is connected to the need for priesthood authority to seal families together in holy temples (see D&C 2:3; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39).
3. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (1954–56), 2:76.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–16.
5. Matthew 19:5; see also Mark 10:7–8.
6. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
8. See Matthew 19:6.
9. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” paragraph 6.
10. Psalm 127:3.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
12. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, 10th ed. (1953), 232–33.
13. See Alma 41:10.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 38:42; see also Isaiah 52:11; 3 Nephi 20:41; Doctrine and Covenants 133:5.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15–18.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 23:3.
17. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (see Matthew 6:33, footnote a).
18. *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (1974), 255.
19. Quoted from J. E. McCulloch, *Home: The Savior of Civilization* (1924), 42; in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 116.
20. “Because,” words by Edward Teschemacher (1902).

President Monson

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 p.m. mountain standard time. We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

We thank this combined choir from Brigham Young University for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Our concluding speaker at this session will be Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Following the remarks of Brother Perry, the choir will sing “Come, Follow Me,” and at the conclusion of the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Memories of becoming a deacon

I had the opportunity a year or two ago of visiting the Logan Utah Institute of Religion. The building where the institute meets was recently remodeled. I was told that as the workers removed the old pulpit from the chapel, they discovered some shelves that had been sealed off for some time. In removing the cover, they found a sacrament tray. It apparently dates back many years because the sacrament cups were made of glass. One of those glass cups, as you see here, was mounted and presented to me—probably because I was the only one old enough to remember the days when glass cups were used.

Seeing the glass cup flooded my mind with pleasant memories. Glass sacrament cups were being used at the time I reached my 12th birthday, a very significant milestone in my life. My 12th birthday happened to fall on Sunday. For years I had watched the deacons pass the sacrament, anticipating the day that I would be blessed to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and have that privilege.

When that day finally arrived, I was asked to come to church early and meet with Brother Ambrose Call, second counselor in our ward bishopric. Brother Call invited me into a classroom and asked me to offer a prayer. He then opened the scriptures and read section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants to me:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”

Brother Call then asked me to comment on this section. My explanation was surely not complete enough, so Brother

Call took some time to explain to me what it meant to be a bearer of the holy priesthood. Being worthy to hold the priesthood entitled me to use the power God delegates to man. One who worthily holds the priesthood can legitimately perform the ordinances God has prescribed for the salvation of the human family. This authority comes directly from the Savior Himself through a continuing line of priesthood holders.

My interview with Brother Call must have been somewhat satisfactory, for I was taken into the deacons quorum meeting. There, the members of the bishopric laid their hands upon my head, and the bishop, who happened at the time to be my father, conferred upon me the Aaronic Priesthood and ordained me to the office of a deacon. I was also sustained by the other deacons to become a member with them in a quorum of the priesthood.

Sacred nature of the sacrament

In sacrament meeting that evening, I had my first opportunity to exercise the priesthood by passing the sacrament to the membership of our ward. The sacrament took on new meaning to me that day. As I watched the tray go up and down the rows of the members of the Church, I noticed that not everyone approached the sacrament with the same attitude. There were those who seemed to partake of the sacrament just as a matter of routine, but there were many, many who accepted the sacrament with great reverence.

Over the years, I have participated, as all of us have, in many sacrament meetings, and to me they really are more than just another meeting. Partaking of the sacrament provides us with a sacred moment in a holy place. We do it in accordance with the commandment the Lord gave us in section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (v. 9).

From the very beginning, before the world was organized, God laid out a plan whereby He would offer blessings to His children based on their obedience to His commandments. He understood, however, that we would be distracted at times by the things of the world and would need to be reminded regularly of our covenants and His promises.

Adam commanded to offer sacrifices

One of the first commandments given to Adam was that he should worship the Lord and offer the firstlings of his flocks as an offering to Him. This ordinance was given to remind the people that Jesus Christ would come into the world and would ultimately offer Himself as a sacrifice.

“And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

“And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

“And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth” (Moses 5:5–7).

Institution of the sacrament

From that day down until the time of our Savior, Heavenly Father’s children were commanded to offer sacrifices. It was discontinued with the Savior’s atoning sacrifice. Then, the night before He completed that sacrifice, the Savior instituted the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to help us remember Him and the Atonement He made for all mankind. Thus, in the ancient law of sacrifice and in the sacrament, the

Lord has helped us be certain that we do not forget His promises and the requirement that we follow Him and obey His will.

In the New Testament we have an account of the Lord administering the sacrament to His disciples. This is found in Matthew, the 26th chapter:

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (verses 26–28).

The Book of Mormon, in 3 Nephi, chapter 18, gives us a detailed account of the Savior’s administration of the sacrament to the Nephites:

“And it came to pass that Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him.

“And while they were gone for bread and wine, he commanded the multitude that they should sit themselves down upon the earth.

“And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.

“And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

“And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the disciples: Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name.

“And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.

“And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

“And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it.

“And it came to pass that they did so, and did drink of it and were filled; and they gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled.

“And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you” (verses 1–10).

His instructions are very clear that we should be willing to do what He has commanded us to do. It would surely be expected that in our day we would again be commanded to partake of the sacrament. As the Doctrine and Covenants tells us:

“It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus” (D&C 20:75).

Renewal of covenants

The purpose of partaking of the sacrament is, of course, to renew the covenants we have made with the Lord.

Elder Delbert L. Stapley instructed us in this when he said about covenants:

“The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a covenant between God and his people. . . . When baptized by an authorized servant of God, we covenant to do God’s will and to obey his commandments. . . . By partaking of the Sacrament we renew all covenants entered into with the Lord and pledge ourselves to take upon us the name

of his Son, to always remember him and keep his commandments” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 14).

Opportunity for spiritual growth

The sacrament is one of the most sacred ordinances in the Church. Partaking of the sacrament worthily gives us an opportunity for spiritual growth.

I remember that when I was a child, beautiful music was played during the passing of the sacrament. The Brethren soon asked us to stop that practice because our minds were centered on the music rather than on the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior. During the administration of the sacrament, we set aside the world. It is a period of spiritual renewal as we recognize the deep spiritual significance of the ordinance offered to each of us personally. If we were to become casual in partaking of the sacrament, we would lose the opportunity for spiritual growth.

Elder Melvin J. Ballard once said:

“I am a witness that there is a spirit attending the administration of the sacrament that warms the soul from head to foot; you feel the wounds of the spirit being healed, and the load is lifted. Comfort and happiness come to the soul that is worthy and truly desirous of partaking of this spiritual food” (“The Sacramental Covenant,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1919, 1027).

When we partake of the sacrament worthily, we remember the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, that He gave up His life and took upon Himself the sins of the world that we may have the blessing of immortality. We take upon ourselves the name of our Savior and promise to always remember Him and to keep His commandments—that is, to “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 84:44).

Attending sacrament meeting

Parents, you have the responsibility of teaching your families the importance of

attending sacrament meeting weekly. It should be a regular family practice. Every family needs that time of renewing and committing to live the gospel in accordance with the teachings of the Savior. Families, properly prepared, will attend sacrament meeting with a spirit of reverence and with gratitude for the opportunity of partaking of the sacred emblems.

I remember an experience our family had while on vacation at a resort area. Because the period of our stay included a Sunday, we made arrangements to attend a sacrament meeting at a nearby chapel. So did hundreds of others staying at the resort. The chapel was filled to overflowing. Before the meeting started, the bishop invited any attending deacons who were worthy and properly dressed to participate in the passing of the sacrament. An adequate number, dressed in white shirts and ties, came forward to receive instructions on how to handle such a large congregation. The ordinance was administered reverently and efficiently. As I observed the congregation, I saw that many were deeply moved by the spirit of the meeting.

After we returned to the resort, there was an obvious difference in the Sabbath-day activities compared to that of the

weekdays. Boats remained tied at the dock; the lake was almost free of swimmers; and the dress for the Sabbath day was very appropriate. Those families saw the fulfillment of the Lord's promise: by going to the house of prayer on His holy day and renewing their covenants to obey the commandments, they were able to keep themselves more fully unspotted from the world (see D&C 59:9).

May there be instilled in each of us an increased reverence for the Sabbath. May we more fully realize the special blessing of being able to partake of the sacrament and its significance in our lives. May we always remember Him and keep His commandments, which He has given us to fulfill the purpose of life and the hope of the eternities that are to come. This is the Lord's work in which we are engaged. God lives. Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. We're permitted to be part of this great gospel plan, of which the sacrament is such a vital part. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Come, Follow Me."

Elder Glenn L. Pace offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 176th Annual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 1, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes. Douglas Brenchley, Ryan Eggett, and Rick Decker directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Monson opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you, brethren, to the general priesthood session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Provo Mis-

sionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, Ryan Eggett, and Rick Decker, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing “Awake, Ye Saints of God, Awake!” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy.

The choir sang “Awake, Ye Saints of God, Awake!”

Elder Ronald T. Halverson offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing “The Lord Is My Shepherd.” Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then address us. He will be followed by Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Presidency of the Seventy, after which we shall hear from Elder Richard G. Hinckley of the Seventy.

The choir sang “The Lord Is My Shepherd.”

Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf

My dear brethren, it is wonderful and humbling to be with you in this worldwide assembly of priesthood holders. I love and admire you. I feel honored to be counted as one of you. I salute you who have the authority to act in the name of God and to perform ordinances which are a vital source of eternal strength and energy for the well-being of mankind.

See the end from the beginning

I will speak today to you wonderful young men who are preparing to make a difference in the world—you who have entered the ranks of the Aaronic Priesthood and you who have already received the sacred oath and covenant of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The priesthood you bear is a wonderful force for good. You live in a time of great challenges and opportunities. As spirit sons of heavenly parents, you are free to make the right choices. This requires hard work, self-discipline, and an optimistic outlook, which will bring joy and freedom into your life now and in the future.

The Lord said to Abraham, “My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee” (Abraham 2:8). My young friends, today I say to you that if you trust the Lord and obey Him, His hand shall be over you, He will help you achieve the great potential He sees in you, and He will help you to see the end from the beginning.

Working as a laundry delivery boy

Allow me to share with you an experience from my own boyhood. When I was 11 years old, my family had to leave East Germany and begin a new life in West Germany overnight. Until my father could get back into his original profession as a government employee, my parents operated a small laundry business in our little town. I became the laundry delivery boy. To be able to do that effectively, I needed a bicycle to pull the heavy laundry cart. I had always dreamed of owning a nice, sleek, shiny, sporty red bicycle. But there had never been enough money to fulfill

this dream. What I got instead was a heavy, ugly, black, sturdy workhorse of a bicycle.

I delivered laundry on that bike before and after school for quite a few years. Most of the time, I was not overly excited about the bike, the cart, or my job. Sometimes the cart seemed so heavy and the work so tiring that I thought my lungs would burst, and I often had to stop to catch my breath. Nevertheless, I did my part because I knew we desperately needed the income as a family, and it was my way to contribute.

If I had only known back then what I learned many years later—if I had only been able to *see the end from the beginning*—I would have had a better appreciation of these experiences, and it would have made my job so much easier.

Many years later, when I was about to be drafted into the military, I decided to volunteer instead and join the air force to become a pilot. I loved flying and thought being a pilot would be my thing.

To be accepted for the program I had to pass a number of tests, including a strict physical exam. The doctors were slightly concerned by the results and did some additional medical tests. Then they announced, “You have scars on your lung which are an indication of a lung disease in your early teenage years, but obviously you are fine now.” The doctors wondered what kind of treatment I had gone through to heal the disease.

Until the day of that examination I had never known that I had any kind of lung disease. Then it became clear to me that my regular exercise in fresh air as a laundry boy had been a key factor in my healing from this illness. Without the extra effort of pedaling that heavy bicycle day in and day out, pulling the laundry cart up and down the streets of our town, I might never have become a jet fighter pilot and later a 747 airline captain.

We are taught by modern prophets

We don’t always know the details of our future. We do not know what lies

ahead. We live in a time of uncertainty. We are surrounded by challenges on all sides. Occasionally discouragement may sneak into our day; frustration may invite itself into our thinking; doubt might enter about the value of our work. In these dark moments Satan whispers in our ears that we will never be able to succeed, that the price isn’t worth the effort, and that our small part will never make a difference. He, the father of all lies, will try to prevent us from seeing the end from the beginning.

Fortunately, you young priesthood holders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are taught by prophets, seers, and revelators of our day. The First Presidency said:

“We have great confidence in you. You are choice spirits. . . . You are at the beginning of your journey through this mortal life. Your Heavenly Father wants your life to be joyful and to lead you back into His presence. The decisions you make now will determine much of what will follow during your life and throughout eternity” (*For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 2). “You have a responsibility to learn what Heavenly Father wants you to do and then to do your best to follow His will” (*Aaronic Priesthood: Fulfilling Our Duty to God* [2001], 4).

How deeply grateful I am for the inspired leadership of our dear President Gordon B. Hinckley, the prophet of God in our time, and his noble counselors. Their prophetic view helps you to see the end from the beginning.

***For the Strength of Youth* gives standards**

The Lord loves you; that is why He has given you commandments and the words of prophets to guide you on your journey through life. Some of the most important guidelines for your life are found in the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*. The physical appearance of this little paper booklet would qualify it for the scriptural description “Out of small things

proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33).

The pamphlet itself has little material value, perhaps just a few cents. But the doctrine and principles it presents are an invaluable treasure. You young men who are already 18 or older, if you don’t have this booklet anymore, make sure to get one, keep it, and use it. This little booklet is a gem for any age-group. It contains standards which are sacred symbols representing our membership in the Church.

Temples provide an eternal perspective

I call your attention to the fact that *For the Strength of Youth*, the accompanying *Guidebook for Parents and Leaders of Youth*, and the temple recommend of the Church all have a picture of the Salt Lake Temple imprinted on the front. The temple is the binding link between generations, in this life and for eternity. All the temples have been dedicated for the same purpose: to assist in accomplishing the divine work and glory of God, our Eternal Father, “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). These temples are sacred structures in which eternal questions are answered, truths are taught, and ordinances performed so that we can live with an understanding of our divine inheritance as children of God and with an awareness of our potential as eternal beings (see Gordon B. Hinckley, “Why These Temples?” in *Temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [1999], 14). The house of the Lord helps you to see the end from the beginning.

Regard bodies as temples given by God

Just as the temples of God are sacred, so are your temporal bodies. The Apostle Paul said:

“Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

My dear fellow priesthood holders of all ages and in all places around this world, let us use our thoughts, our minds and hearts, and our bodies with the respect and dignity worthy of a sacred temple given to us by our Heavenly Father.

Promises for keeping standards

The prophets of our day have promised you, my friends, that as you keep the standards given in *For the Strength of Youth* and “live by the truths in the scriptures, you will be able to do your life’s work with greater wisdom and skill and bear trials with greater courage. You will have the help of the Holy Ghost. . . . You will be worthy to go to the temple to receive holy ordinances. These blessings and many more can be yours” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 2–3).

We know that God keeps His promises. We need to fulfill our part to receive His blessings. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21).

Preparation for going to the temple

Every member who wants to go to the temple, regardless of age, needs to prepare for this sacred experience. Certain questions will be asked by your bishop and stake president, who hold keys of priesthood authority and are common judges in the Church. These vital questions will include: Are you honest? Are you morally clean? Do you keep the Word of Wisdom? Do you obey the law of tithing? And do you sustain the authorities of the Church? The answers to these key questions reflect your attitudes and actions.

You younger men might not be aware that the standards set by the Lord in the

temple recommend questions are very similar to the standards found in *For the Strength of Youth*. In times of calmness but also in times of greatest temptation, these standards and the guidance of the Holy Ghost will help you make the right choices about your education, friends, dress and appearance, entertainment, media and the Internet, your language, proper dating, sexual purity, honesty, Sabbath-day observance, and service to others. How you apply these standards will say much about who you are and what you seek to become.

A bright and wonderful future

The Lord wants you, my young friends, to desire with all your heart to keep these standards and live by the gospel truths found in the scriptures. As you do this, you will see beyond the moment, and you will see your bright and wonderful future with great opportunities and responsibilities. You will be willing to work hard and endure long, and you will have an optimistic outlook on life. You will see that your life's road will lead you to the house of the Lord first and then to serve a full-time mission, representing the Savior wherever He will send you. After your mission you will organize and plan your life based on the same standards. Therefore, in your mind's eye you will see yourself entering the house of the Lord for an eternal marriage and family. Your priorities in life will change to match the priorities given to us by the Savior. And God will bless you and open the eyes of your understanding so you can see the end from the beginning.

Living the standards set in *For the Strength of Youth* will make you feel good about yourself. Write those standards into your heart and mind, and live accordingly. Compare each of those standards with where you are today. Listen to the Spirit, who will teach you what you need to do to become more like Jesus. If you recognize a need for change, make the change; don't procrastinate. Use true repentance and

the gift and power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to clear up those things that are keeping you from reaching your true potential. If this process appears tough, hang in there; it is worth it. The Lord has a promise for you as He had for the Prophet Joseph: "Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good" (D&C 122:7).

The need to teach youth by example

Now, my dear grandfathers, fathers, uncles, brothers, and friends of our young people, we can be of great help in this process. King Benjamin taught that when parents are truly converted, they "will teach [their children] to walk in the ways of truth and soberness [and] will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another" (Mosiah 4:15). It has been said, "Teaching by example is *one* way to teach." I would say, "Teaching by example is the *best* way to teach."

Please teach our young people by your example of being a temple-worthy priesthood holder. Your good life, your love for God and fellowmen, your applied testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will be a convincing power to our youth, and it will help them to see the end from the beginning.

My dear young friends, please perfect your lives in living these standards given by the prophets of our day. As you do this, step-by-step, day after day, you will honor the priesthood and you will be prepared to make a difference in the world. You will also be on the right track to return with honor to our Heavenly Father.

My dear fellow servants of the priesthood, I promise you today that when you follow this pattern, the Lord will help you to make more out of your life than you ever can by yourself. He will help you always to see the end from the beginning!

Of this I testify as an Apostle of the Lord, our Savior, and in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Ronald A. Rasband

Good evening, my dear brethren of the priesthood. Tonight throughout the world we are gathered nearer to the temples of the Lord than ever before in the history of mankind. Through the loving-kindness of our Savior in directing His prophets, 122 temples are now accessible to the Lord's covenant people to obtain their own temple blessings and perform vital ordinances for their departed ancestors. And more have been announced and are coming! We thank you, President Hinckley, for your inspired leadership in this tremendous effort.

King Benjamin's sermon near the temple

In an early Book of Mormon time, the members of the Church also gathered near a temple to receive instruction from their prophet and leader. Late in his life, King Benjamin called upon fathers to bring their families together, to give them counsel and admonitions. From Mosiah we read:

"And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, . . . every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them" (Mosiah 2:5–6).

I love the imagery of these verses. Figuratively speaking, brethren, are the doors of our homes pitched towards the temples we so love? Do we attend as often as we can, showing our children through our example the importance of these sacred and special places?

As recorded in Mosiah, families received the word of the Lord through their prophet with enthusiasm and commitment. The people were so moved by King Benjamin's teachings that they entered

into a new covenant to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, there is a sad epilogue to this story. We learn later in Mosiah concerning those who were but little children in the tents at the time of King Benjamin's sermon:

"Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers" (Mosiah 26:1).

What of our rising generation?

What happened to that rising generation, brethren? Why didn't the young children accept the righteous traditions of their fathers? More importantly, here we are centuries later, in a day of many temples and constant prophetic direction, and what of our rising generation? Do we have reason to be concerned? Certainly we do!

The young men here and throughout the world, and their young women counterparts, are very special. President Hinckley has spoken of them:

"I have said many times that I believe we have the finest generation of young people that this Church has ever known. . . . They try to do the right thing. They are bright and able, clean and fresh, attractive and smart. . . . They know what the gospel is about, and they are trying to live it, looking to the Lord for His guidance and help" ("Your Greatest Challenge, Mother," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 97–98).

All of us who are involved with these youth know the truth of President Hinckley's words.

Warning that youth will be tested

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, however, provides

us with a somber warning, speaking of the youth:

“Many of them are remarkable in their spiritual maturity and in their faith. But even the best of them are sorely tested. And the testing will become more severe” (“We Must Raise Our Sights,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2004, 14).

This warning that “the testing will become more severe” gets my attention. Our rising generation is worthy of our best efforts to support and strengthen them in their journey to adulthood.

“All hands on deck”

In these perilous times, as our youth are faced with this increased adversity, we can learn from others. In the armed forces, particularly in all the navies throughout the world, every seaman understands one phrase that is a clarion call for immediate help, no matter what he is doing or where he is on the ship. The call is “All hands on deck.” Many a battle at sea has been won or lost by the response to this call.

We—as members of the Church, leaders of youth, anxious fathers, and concerned grandfathers—all need to respond to the call for “all hands on deck” as it pertains to our youth and young single adults. We must all look for opportunities to bless the youth whether or not we are currently closely associated with them. We must continue to teach and fortify fathers and mothers in their divinely declared roles with their children in the home. We must ask ourselves constantly if that extra sporting event, that extra activity or errand outside of the home is more important than families being together at home.

Now is the time, brethren, when in every action we take, in every place we go, with every Latter-day Saint young person we meet, we need to have an increased awareness of the need for strengthening, nurturing, and being an influence for good in their lives.

Spiritual experiences with children

In our own family, we have had such an experience with wonderful, watchful priesthood leaders. When I was first called to the Seventy some years ago, we were assigned to move to Solihull, England, to serve in the Area Presidency. Sister Rasband and I took our two youngest children with us on this assignment. Our daughter was a young single adult and our son a 17-year-old who liked American-style football and played it very well. We were very concerned about them. No friends, no extended family, and no American football! I wondered, would this exciting new experience prove to be a serious trial for our family?

The answer came in an early assignment I received. I had been asked to speak to the missionaries at the Missionary Training Center in Preston, England. I called President White of the center and was pleased to hear that he knew of my family situation. He suggested we include our children on our visit to Preston. Once we were there, he even invited our daughter and son to speak to the missionaries! What a thrill for them to be and feel included and share their testimonies of the Lord’s work!

When finished and after tender good-byes to those missionaries, we visited the beautiful Preston England Temple, which was close to the Missionary Training Center. As we walked near the front door, there stood President and Sister Swanney, the temple president and matron. They greeted us and welcomed us into the temple with, “Elder Rasband, how would you and your family like to perform baptisms for the dead?” What a wonderful idea! We looked at each other and gratefully accepted. After performing the ordinances and while my son and I were still in the font with tears of joy in our eyes, he put his hand on my shoulder and asked, “Dad, why haven’t we ever done this before?”

I thought of all the football games, all the movies we had attended together, all of the good times we had shared—certainly happy memories and traditions that are so important to build.

However, I realized we had an opportunity to add more meaningful spiritual experiences with our children like what we had experienced in Preston that day. Thanks to those caring and observant priesthood leaders, I knew then that our family was going to do fine in Europe. How grateful we are for the many priesthood and Young Women leaders who have always been watchful and loving to our children and yours.

Teach children to look to Christ

Looking to another Book of Mormon time: Nephi lived in a situation where some members of his family struggled with obedience, harmony, and faithfulness. He most certainly understood the necessity

for attentive commitment to children of the rising generation. He said late in his life:

“And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

I pray that as the holders of the priesthood of God we may each of us do all things that lie in our power to teach our youth what source they may look to for a remission of their sins, even the Lord Jesus Christ. May we each respond with our most sincere efforts to “all hands on deck” as it pertains to saving our own rising generation—they are certainly worth our very best efforts.

I testify that this is the Lord’s true Church, directed by Him through our dear prophet, even Gordon B. Hinckley, whom I love and sustain. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard G. Hinckley

Gratitude for family

My dear brethren, I am both humbled and honored to occupy this position. For reasons obvious to you, it never entered my mind that such a calling would come to me. One year ago when I was sustained, President Hinckley made it clear to the entire Church that he had not initiated the process that resulted in my call. I told him later that I was likely the only General Authority in the history of the Church to be sustained by the members in spite of a disclaimer by the prophet!

Nevertheless, I am grateful for your sustaining vote and pledge my whole heart to this great cause. I am grateful beyond expression for my family, for my wife and children, and for my good parents. My mother passed away two years ago, just

two days after April conference. She was small in stature, yet I stand on her shoulders every day. Her influence will ever be with me. I cannot honor her properly by what I say but only by how I live.

I do not know what to say of my father that would not embarrass him, except that I love him and that I sustain him. At the risk of being too personal, I will say that as I watch him grow older, my mind goes back to days when we were little children, when he would lie on the floor and wrestle and play with us and lift us in his arms and hug us and tickle us, or pull us up into bed with Mother and him when we were sick or frightened in the night. My memories of him will ever be of laughter and love, of steadiness, of testimony, of relentless hard work, of faith and fidelity. He is kind and wise, and I am blessed beyond measure

that I not only sustain him as my prophet for this season of mortality but that I also claim him as my father now and throughout all eternity.

“What Church membership means to me”

Several weeks ago my mind was stimulated when Elder Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy was asked to give a brief history of his grandfather LeGrand Richards in a quorum meeting. Among other interesting things he reported was this: When Elder Richards was a young bishop, he visited those who were less active. He boldly invited them to speak in sacrament meeting to the subject “What my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints means to me.” Remarkably, several of them responded positively, and that experience put them on the road back to full activity in the Church.

I would like to speak to that same theme this evening. I invite each of you, young or old, to dedicate a small notebook to this theme. Write at the top of the first page the words “What my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints means to me.” Then briefly list those things that come to mind. Over time, additional thoughts will come, which you can add to your list. Soon you will have a growing booklet that will fill you with gratitude and appreciation for your membership in the Lord’s Church. It may even provide a resource for talks you may be asked to give in the future.

My list is already long, and I have selected just a single item from it to discuss this evening. I must save other topics for another place and time.

The principle of repentance

I will speak briefly of the principle of repentance. How grateful I am for the understanding we have of this great principle. It is not a harsh principle, as I thought when I was a boy. It is kind and merciful.

The Hebrew root of the word means, simply, “to turn,”¹ or to *return*, to God. Jehovah pled with the children of Israel: “Return . . . and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful . . . and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.”²

When we acknowledge our sins, confess them and forsake them, and turn to God, He will forgive us.

A young widow seeks forgiveness

While I was serving as mission president recently, two of our elders asked if I would meet with an investigator who was scheduled for baptism the following day. She had some questions they were unable to answer. We drove to her home, where I met a young widow in her late 20s with a child. Her husband had been killed in a tragic accident a few years earlier. Her questions were thoughtful, and she was receptive. After these were resolved, I asked if she had any other concerns. She indicated that she did and that she wanted to speak with me alone. I asked the elders to step outside and stand on the lawn where they could see us clearly through a large window.

As soon as the door closed behind them, she began to weep. She recounted her years alone, filled with heartache and loneliness. During those years she had made some serious mistakes. She had known better, she said, but had lacked the strength to choose the right path until she had met our missionaries. During the weeks they taught her, she had pled with the Lord to forgive her. She sought assurance from me that through her repentance and through the ordinances of baptism and the receipt of the Holy Ghost, she could be cleansed and become worthy of membership in the Church. I taught her from the scriptures and bore testimony of the principle of repentance and of the Atonement.

The next day my wife and I attended her baptism and that of her little girl. The room was filled with friends from her ward, ready and anxious to stand by her as a new member of the Church. As we left that service, I was overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude for the magnificent principle of repentance and for the Atonement that makes it possible, for the miracle of conversion, for this great Church and its members, and for our missionaries.

What does my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints mean to me? It means everything. It influences, enlivens, permeates, and gives purpose and meaning to everything in life that is important to me: my relationship with God, my Eternal Father, and with His Holy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It teaches me that through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel, I will find peace and happiness in this life and be invited to live in God's presence, with my

family, in the life that surely will follow mortality, where His mercy will satisfy the demands of justice and encircle me and mine, and you and yours, in the arms of safety.³ I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Joseph P. Healey, "Repentance," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (1992), 5:671.
2. Jeremiah 3:12–13.
3. See Alma 34:16.

President Monson

We shall now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. The choir and congregation will then sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," for indeed we do. Following the singing, it will be my pleasure to address you.

President James E. Faust

Blessing of holding Aaronic Priesthood

My dear brethren, it is always a great privilege and heavy responsibility to address the priesthood of the Church. This is possibly the largest gathering of priesthood in the history of the world. I should like to speak to you young men about how blessed you are to hold the Aaronic Priesthood, which is also known as the "lesser priesthood." But the word *lesser*, however, does not in any way take away from its importance. There's nothing small about it—especially when I see how big some of you young men are!

The honor of passing the sacrament

I'm sure you remember how excited you were the first time you passed the sacrament. As you Aaronic Priesthood

holders assist in preparing, blessing, administering, and passing the sacrament, you help all members who partake thereof to recommit themselves to the Lord and to renew their faith in the Savior's atoning sacrifice. Members who take the sacrament are reminded to take upon themselves the name of the Son, always remember Him, keep His commandments, and seek to have His Spirit to be with them. I hope that you will value the priesthood you hold and always honor your priesthood duties.

I recently read the account of some deacons who got a little careless in their attitude towards passing the sacrament. They began to think of it as a chore, something that no one else wanted to do. They often came in late, and sometimes they didn't dress appropriately. One Sunday their priesthood adviser told them: "You

don't have to worry about the sacrament today. It's been taken care of."

They were, of course, surprised to hear this, but as usual, they were late for sacrament meeting. They slipped in casually during the opening hymn and sat in the congregation. That's when they noticed who was sitting on the deacons' bench—their adviser and the high priests of the ward, who included men who had served as bishops and stake president. They were all dressed in dark suits with white shirts and ties. But more than that, their bearing was one of total reverence as they took the sacrament trays from row to row. Something was deeper and more significant about the sacrament that day. Those deacons who had become so perfunctory in their duties learned by example that passing the sacrament was a sacred trust and one of the greatest of honors.¹ They began to realize that the priesthood is, as the Apostle Peter called it, "a royal priesthood."²

Generally, the Aaronic Priesthood, under the direction of the bishopric, has the responsibility to administer and pass the sacrament. In our home ward here in Salt Lake City, we have a good number of faithful, older members but few of Aaronic Priesthood age. Over the years I have watched these high priests and elders, men of faith and great accomplishments, humbly and reverently pass the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For a while this group of priesthood holders included a senior federal judge, a candidate for the office of governor of the state of Utah, and other prominent men of stature. Yet they were honored and obviously felt privileged to perform this sacred priesthood duty.

The Aaronic Priesthood is a great gift of spiritual power that the Lord conferred upon Aaron and his sons.³ It holds "the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel"⁴ and also includes "the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."⁵

The ministering of angels

I would like to say a word about the ministering of angels. In ancient and modern times angels have appeared and given instruction, warnings, and direction, which benefited the people they visited. We do not consciously realize the extent to which ministering angels affect our lives. President Joseph F. Smith said, "In like manner our fathers and mothers, brothers, sisters and friends who have passed away from this earth, having been faithful, and worthy to enjoy these rights and privileges, may have a mission given them to visit their relatives and friends upon the earth again, bringing from the divine Presence messages of love, of warning, or reproof and instruction, to those whom they had learned to love in the flesh."⁶ Many of us feel that we have had this experience. Their ministry has been and is an important part of the gospel. Angels ministered to Joseph Smith as he reestablished the gospel in its fullness.

Alma the Younger's conversion

Alma the Younger had a personal experience with ministering angels. As a young man, he was numbered among the unbelievers and "led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities." One day, "while he was going about to destroy the church of God" in company with the sons of Mosiah, an "angel of the Lord appeared unto them; and he descended as it were in a cloud; and he spake as it were with a voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake." The angel then cried out, "Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God?"

Alma was so overcome by this experience that he fainted and had to be carried to his father. Only after his father and others had fasted and prayed for two days was Alma restored to full health and strength. He then stood up and declared, "I have repented of my sins, and have been re-

deemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.”⁷ Alma went on to become one of the greatest missionaries in the Book of Mormon. Yet in all his many years of missionary service, he never spoke of the angel’s visit. Instead, he chose to testify that the truth had been made known to him by the Holy Spirit of God.

To be instructed by an angel would be a great blessing. However, as Alma taught us, his final and lasting conversion came only after he had “fasted and prayed many days.”⁸ His complete conversion came from the Holy Ghost, which is available to all of us if we are worthy.

Miraculous events have not always been a source of conversion. For example, when Laman and Lemuel physically mistreated their younger brothers, an angel appeared and warned them to stop. The angel also reassured all of the brothers that Laban would be delivered into their hands. Nephi, on the one hand, believed and claimed the brass plates from Laban. Laman and Lemuel, on the other hand, did not believe, nor did they change their behavior as a result of the angelic visit. As Nephi reminded them, “How is it that ye have forgotten that ye have seen an angel of the Lord?”⁹

You young men are building your testimonies. These are strengthened by spiritual confirmation through the Holy Ghost in the ordinary experiences of life. While some great manifestation could strengthen your testimony, it won’t likely happen that way.

Blessings and obligations of the Aaronic Priesthood

While holding the priesthood brings great blessings, the priesthood also carries with it great obligations.

1. All priesthood holders need to magnify their callings, acting in the Lord’s name to the extent their office and calling permit. We magnify our callings by following the direction of our quorum presi-

dency, the bishop, and our quorum adviser. It means preparing, administering, and passing the sacrament as we are asked to do so. It also means performing other responsibilities of the Aaronic Priesthood, such as cleaning our Church meeting-houses, setting up chairs for stake conference and other Church meetings, and performing other duties as assigned.

2. Holders of the Aaronic, or preparatory, Priesthood are obligated to qualify for the higher priesthood and to receive training for greater responsibilities in Church service.

3. Holding the Aaronic Priesthood carries with it the obligation of being a good example, with clean thoughts and proper behavior. We acquire these attributes as we carry out our priesthood duties.

4. You will be associated in your quorum and other activities with young men who have the same standards that you have. You can strengthen each other.

5. You can study the scriptures and learn gospel principles to help you prepare for a mission.

6. You can learn to pray and recognize answers.

Duties of the Aaronic Priesthood

The Doctrine and Covenants describes different kinds of authority relating to the Aaronic Priesthood. First, ordination to the priesthood gives authority to perform the ordinances and possess the power of the Aaronic Priesthood. The bishopric is the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood in the ward.¹⁰ Second, within this priesthood are different offices, each with different responsibilities and privileges. As a deacon, you are to watch over the Church as a standing minister.¹¹ As a teacher, in addition to watching over the Church, you are to “be with and strengthen them.”¹² As a priest, you are “to preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament, and visit the

house of each member.”¹³ Your bishop, who holds the office of high priest, is also the president of the priests quorum and directs the work of the quorum.

As you progress from one of these offices of the Aaronic Priesthood to the next, you will retain the authority of the previous one. For example, those of you who are priests still have authority to do everything you did as deacons and teachers. Indeed, even when you are ultimately ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, you will still keep and act in the offices of the Aaronic Priesthood. The late Elder LeGrand Richards, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve for many years, understood this principle well. He often used to say, “I’m just a grown-up deacon.”

As I have noted, teaching is one of the important duties of the Aaronic Priesthood. The opportunity for you young teenagers to teach often comes as you serve as a home teaching companion to your father or some other Melchizedek Priesthood holder. Looking after needs in a temporal and spiritual way is a very significant part of watching over the Church.

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave high priority to home teaching. A Brother Oakley was the Prophet’s home teacher, and whenever Brother Oakley went home teaching to the Smith home, “the Prophet called his family together and gave his own chair to Oakley, telling his family” to listen carefully to Brother Oakley.¹⁴

The evil of addiction

You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood need to have the Spirit with you in your personal lives as well as in home teaching, preparing or passing the sacrament, or other priesthood activities. You will need to avoid some stumbling blocks. One of the biggest of these is addiction.

I counsel all of you brethren to avoid every kind of addiction. At this time Satan and his followers are enslaving some of our choicest young people through addic-

tion to alcohol, all kinds of drugs, pornography, tobacco, gambling, and other compulsive disorders. Some people seem to be born with a weakness for these substances so that only a single experimentation will result in uncontrollable addiction. Some addictions are actually mind-altering and create a craving that overpowers reason and judgment. These addictions destroy the lives not only of those who do not resist them but also their parents, spouses, and children. As the prophet Jeremiah lamented, “The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates.”¹⁵

The Lord in His wisdom has warned us that substances that are not good for us should be totally avoided. We have been warned not to take the first drink, smoke the first cigarette, or try the first drug. Curiosity and peer pressure are selfish reasons to dabble with addictive substances. We should stop and consider the full consequences, not just to ourselves and our futures, but also to our loved ones. These consequences are physical, but they also risk the loss of the Spirit and cause us to fall prey to Satan.

I testify of the refining, spiritual, comforting, strengthening, and restraining influence the priesthood has had in my life. I have lived under its spiritual influence all my life—in my grandfather’s home, in my father’s home, and then in my own home. It is humbling to use the transcending power and authority of the priesthood to empower others and to heal and bless. May we live worthy of holding the priesthood authority to act in the name of God, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Adapted from Laird Roberts, “On Water and Bread,” *New Era*, May 1984, 8–9.
2. 1 Peter 2:9.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:18.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 84:26.

5. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.
6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 436.
7. See Mosiah 27:8–24.
8. Alma 5:46.
9. 1 Nephi 7:10.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:15.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:111; see also Doctrine and Covenants 20:57–59.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 20:53.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 20:46–47.

14. William G. Hartley, “Ordained and Acting Teachers in the Lesser Priesthood, 1851–1883,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, spring 1976, 384.
15. Lamentations 4:12.

The choir and congregation sang “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

President Thomas S. Monson

A great blessing to hold the priesthood

Some years ago as our youngest son, Clark, was approaching his 12th birthday, he and I were leaving the Church Administration Building when President Harold B. Lee approached and greeted us. I mentioned to President Lee that Clark would soon be 12, whereupon President Lee turned to him and asked, “What happens to you when you turn 12?”

This was one of those times when a father prays that a son will be inspired to give a proper response. Clark, without hesitation, said to President Lee, “I will be ordained a deacon!”

The answer was the one for which I had prayed and which President Lee had sought. He then counseled our son, “Remember, it is a great blessing to hold the priesthood.”

Be prepared to share testimony

I hope with all my heart and soul that every young man who receives the priesthood will honor that priesthood and be true to the trust which is conveyed when it is conferred. May each of us who holds the priesthood of God know what he believes. As the Apostle Peter admonished, may we ever be ready “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”¹ There will be occasions in each of our lives when we

will be called upon to explain or to defend our beliefs. When the time for performance arrives, the time for preparation is past.

Most of you young men will have the opportunity to share your testimonies when you serve as missionaries throughout the world. Prepare now for that wonderful privilege.

Answering a state secretary’s questions

I have experienced many opportunities. One occurred 21 years ago, prior to the time when the German Democratic Republic—or East Germany, as it was more commonly known—was freed from Communist rule. I was visiting with the East German state secretary, Minister Gysi. At that time our temple at Freiberg, in East Germany, was under construction, along with two or three meetinghouses. Minister Gysi and I visited on a number of subjects, including our worldwide building program. He then asked, “Why is your church so wealthy that you can afford to build buildings in our country and throughout the world? How do you get your money?”

I answered that the Church is not wealthy but that we follow the ancient biblical principle of tithing, which principle is reemphasized in our modern scripture. I explained also that our Church has no paid ministry and indicated that these

were two reasons why we were able to build the buildings then under way, including the beautiful temple at Freiberg.

Minister Gysi was most impressed with the information I presented, and I was very grateful I was able to answer his questions.

The opportunity to declare a truth may come when we least expect it. Let us be prepared.

“Divine authority by direct revelation”

On one occasion, President David O. McKay was asked by a woman not a member of the Church what specific belief set apart the teachings of the Church from those of any other faith. In speaking of this later, President McKay indicated that he had felt impressed to answer, “That which differentiates the beliefs of my church from those of others is divine authority by direct revelation.”²

Where could we find a more significant example of divine authority by direct revelation than in the events which occurred that “beautiful, clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty,” when the lad Joseph Smith retired to the woods to pray. His words describing that moment in history are overpowering:

“I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”³

Our thoughts turn to the visit of that heavenly messenger John the Baptist on May 15, 1829. There on the bank of the Susquehanna River, near Harmony, Pennsylvania, John laid his hands upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and ordained them, saying, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by

immersion for the remission of sins.”⁴ The messenger announced that he acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Ordination and baptism followed. This is yet another example of divine authority by direct revelation.

In due time, Peter, James, and John were sent to bestow the blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood. These Apostles sent by the Lord ordained and confirmed Joseph and Oliver to be Apostles and special witnesses of His name. Divine authority by direct revelation characterized this sacred visitation.

As a result of these experiences, all of us carry the requirement—even the blessed opportunity and solemn duty—to be true to the trust we have received.

President Brigham Young declared, “The Priesthood of the Son of God is . . . the law by which the worlds are, were, and will continue for ever and ever.”⁵ President Joseph F. Smith, expanding on this theme, advised, “It is nothing more nor less than the power of God delegated to man by which man can act in the earth for the salvation of the human family, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and act legitimately; not assuming that authority, nor borrowing it from generations that are dead and gone, but authority that has been given in this day in which we live by ministering angels and spirits from above, direct from the presence of Almighty God.”⁶

Interview with stake president

As I approached my 18th birthday and prepared to enter military service in World War II, I was recommended to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Mine was the task to telephone President Paul C. Child, my stake president, for an interview. He was one who loved and understood the holy scriptures, and it was his intent that all others should similarly love and understand them. As I knew from others of his

rather detailed and searching interviews, our telephone conversation went something like this:

“Hello, President Child. This is Brother Monson. I have been asked by the bishop to visit with you relative to being ordained an elder.”

“Fine, Brother Monson. When can you see me?”

Knowing that his sacrament meeting time was 4:00 and desiring minimum exposure of my scriptural knowledge to his review, I suggested, “How would 3:00 be?”

His response: “Oh, Brother Monson, that would not provide us sufficient time to peruse the scriptures. Could you please come at 2:00 and bring with you your personally marked set of scriptures?”

Sunday finally arrived, and I visited President Child’s home. I was greeted warmly, and then the interview began. He said, “Brother Monson, you hold the Aaronic Priesthood.” Of course, I knew that. He continued, “Have you ever had an angel minister to you?”

My reply, “I’m not sure.”

“Do you know,” said he, “that you are entitled to such?”

Came my response: “No.”

Then he instructed, “Brother Monson, repeat from memory the 13th section of the Doctrine and Covenants.”

I began, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels . . .”

“Stop,” President Child directed. Then in a calm, kindly tone, he counseled, “Brother Monson, never forget that as a holder of the Aaronic Priesthood you are entitled to the ministering of angels. Now continue the passage.”

I recited from memory the remainder of the section. President Child said, “Splendid.” He then discussed with me several other sections of the Doctrine and

Covenants pertaining to the priesthood. It was a long interview, but I have never forgotten it. At the conclusion, President Child put his arm around my shoulder and said, “You are now ready to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Remember that the Lord blesses the person who serves Him.”

Experience at leadership meeting

Many years later, Paul C. Child, then of the Priesthood Welfare Committee, and I attended a stake conference together. At the priesthood leadership session, when it was his turn to speak, he took his scriptures in hand and walked from the stand into the congregation. Knowing President Child as I did, I knew what he was going to do. He quoted from the Doctrine and Covenants, including section 18 concerning the worth of a soul, indicating that we should labor all our days to bring souls unto the Lord. He then turned to one elders quorum president and asked, “What is the worth of a soul?”

The stunned quorum president hesitated as he formulated his reply. I had a prayer in my heart that he would be able to answer the question. He finally responded, “The worth of a soul is its capacity to become as God.”

Brother Child closed his scriptures, walked solemnly and quietly up the aisle and back to the stand. As he passed by me, he said, “A most profound reply.”

Oath and covenant of the priesthood

We need to know the oath and covenant of the priesthood because it pertains to all of us. To those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, it is a declaration of our requirement to be faithful and obedient to the laws of God and to magnify the callings which come to us. To those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood, it is a pronouncement concerning future

duty and responsibility, that they may prepare themselves here and now.

This oath and covenant is set forth by the Lord in these words:

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

“For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

“And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.”⁷

The late Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Quorum of the Twelve once observed: “There are two main requirements of this oath and covenant. First is faithfulness, which denotes obedience to the laws of God and connotes true observance of all gospel standards. . . .

“The second requirement . . . is to magnify one’s calling. To magnify is to honor, to exalt and glorify, and cause to be held in greater esteem or respect. It also means to increase the importance of, to enlarge and make greater.”⁸

The Prophet Joseph Smith was once asked, “Brother Joseph, you frequently urge that we magnify our callings. What does this mean?” He is said to have replied, “To magnify a calling is to hold it up in dignity and importance, that the light of heaven may shine through one’s performance to the gaze of other men. An elder magnifies his calling when he learns what his duties as an elder are and then performs them.”

Priest’s experience blessing the sacrament

Those who bear the Aaronic Priesthood should be given opportunity to magnify their callings in that priesthood.

One Sunday two years ago I was attending sacrament meeting in my ward. That’s a rarity. There were three priests at the sacrament table, with the young man in the center being somewhat handicapped in movement but particularly so in speech. He tried twice to bless the bread but stumbled badly each time, no doubt embarrassed by his inability to give the prayer perfectly. One of the other priests then took over and gave the blessing on the bread.

During the passing of the bread, I thought to myself, “I just can’t let that young man experience failure at the sacrament table.” I had a strong feeling that if I didn’t doubt, he would be able to bless the water effectively. Inasmuch as I was on the stand near the sacrament table, I leaned over and said to the priest closest to me, pointing to the young man who had experienced the difficulty, “Let him bless the water; it’s a shorter prayer.” And then I prayed. I didn’t want a double failure. I love that passage of scripture which tells us that we should not doubt but believe.⁹

When it was time to bless the water, that young man knelt again and gave the prayer, perhaps somewhat haltingly but without missing a word. I rejoiced silently. While the deacons were passing the trays, I looked over at the boy and gave him a thumbs-up. He gave me a broad smile. When the young men were excused to sit with their families, he sat on the row between his mother and father. What a joy it was to see his mother give him a big smile and a warm hug, while his father congratulated him and put his arm around his shoulder. All three of them looked in my direction, and I gave them all a thumbs-up. I could see the mother and father wiping

tears from their eyes. I felt impressed that this young man would do just fine in the future.

Example of Isaac Reiter

The priesthood is not really so much a gift as it is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others.

Not long ago I received a letter concerning a choice young deacon, Isaac Reiter, and the deacons, teachers, and priests who served, lifted, and blessed his life and their own lives.

Isaac fought cancer from the time he was seven months old until his death at age 13. When he and his family moved to a home near a hospital so that Isaac could receive proper medical attention, the Aaronic Priesthood members in the nearby ward were asked to provide the sacrament to them each Sunday. This weekly ordinance became a favorite of the Aaronic Priesthood holders who participated. Along with their leaders and Isaac's family, they would gather around Isaac's hospital bed, sing hymns, and share testimonies. Then the sacrament would be blessed. Isaac always insisted that, as a deacon, he pass the sacrament to his family and to those who had brought it. As he lay in his bed, he gathered the strength to hold a plate of either the blessed bread or water. All present would come to Isaac and partake of the sacrament from the plate. Nurses and other medical staff soon began to participate in the meeting as they realized that Isaac was close to his Heavenly Father and always honored Him. Though weak and in pain, Isaac always held himself with the honor of someone holding a royal priesthood.

Isaac was a great example to the young men in the ward. They saw his desire to fulfill his duties, even on his deathbed, and they realized that those duties were really privileges. They began showing up earlier in order to prepare the sacrament and to

be in their seats on time. There was more reverence.

Isaac Reiter became a living sermon concerning honoring the priesthood. At his funeral, it was said that throughout his life he had one foot in heaven. No doubt he continues to magnify his duties and assist in the work beyond the veil.

Whom God calls, God qualifies

For those of us who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, our privilege to magnify our callings is ever present. We are shepherds watching over Israel. The hungry sheep do look up, ready to be fed the bread of life. Are we prepared, brethren, to feed the flock of God? It is imperative that we recognize the worth of a human soul, that we never give up on one of His precious sons.

Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to do better because of that greatest of fears, the fear of failure, there is no more comforting assurance to be had than the words of the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."¹⁰

Miracles are everywhere to be found when priesthood callings are magnified. When faith replaces doubt, when selfless service eliminates selfish striving, the power of God brings to pass His purposes. Whom God calls, God qualifies.

May our Heavenly Father ever bless, ever inspire, and ever lead all who hold His precious priesthood is my sincere prayer, and I offer it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Peter 3:15.
2. See David O. McKay, *Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life* (1971), 375.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:14, 17.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 13:1.

5. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 130.
6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 139–40.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–38.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1957, 76.
9. See Mormon 9:27.
10. Ether 12:27.

President Monson

Brethren, we remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 a.m. We encourage you to move

your clocks ahead one hour before you retire this evening.

We express appreciation to the priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes for the beautiful music, the inspiring music they have provided this evening.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, a man of God, will be our concluding speaker at this priesthood session. Listen carefully, brethren, to the prophet speak. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Come, O Thou King of Kings.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brother Monson is a very difficult man to follow. He is full of humor and yet great sincerity.

Thank you, my brethren, for your faith and prayers. I deeply appreciate them.

Why so much hatred in the world?

When a man grows old he develops a softer touch, a kindlier manner. I have thought of this much of late.

I have wondered why there is so much hatred in the world. We are involved in terrible wars with lives lost and many crippling wounds. Coming closer to home, there is so much of jealousy, pride, arrogance, and carping criticism; fathers who rise in anger over small, inconsequential things and make wives weep and children fear.

Racial hatred has no basis among us

Racial strife still lifts its ugly head. I am advised that even right here among us there is some of this. I cannot understand how it can be. It seemed to me that we all rejoiced in the 1978 revelation given Pres-

ident Kimball. I was there in the temple at the time that that happened. There was no doubt in my mind or in the minds of my associates that what was revealed was the mind and the will of the Lord.

Now I am told that racial slurs and denigrating remarks are sometimes heard among us. I remind you that no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ. Nor can he consider himself to be in harmony with the teachings of the Church of Christ. How can any man holding the Melchizedek Priesthood arrogantly assume that he is eligible for the priesthood whereas another who lives a righteous life but whose skin is of a different color is ineligible?

Throughout my service as a member of the First Presidency, I have recognized and spoken a number of times on the diversity we see in our society. It is all about us, and we must make an effort to accommodate that diversity.

Let us all recognize that each of us is a son or daughter of our Father in Heaven, who loves all of His children.

Brethren, there is no basis for racial hatred among the priesthood of this Church. If any within the sound of my voice is inclined to indulge in this, then let him go before the Lord and ask for forgiveness and be no more involved in such.

Duty of husbands to support families

I receive letters from time to time suggesting items that the writers feel should be dealt with at conference. One such came the other day. It is from a woman who indicates that her first marriage ended in divorce. She then met a man who seemed to be a very kind and considerate individual. However, she discovered soon after marriage that his finances were in disarray; he had little money, yet he quit his job and refused employment. She was then forced to go to work to provide for the family.

Years have passed, and he still is unemployed. She then speaks of two other men who are following the same pattern, refusing to work while their wives are compelled to spend long hours providing for their households.

Said Paul to Timothy, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). Those are very strong words.

The Lord has said in modern revelation:

"Women have claim on their husbands for their maintenance, until their husbands are taken. . . .

"All children have claim upon their parents for their maintenance until they are of age" (D&C 83:2, 4).

From the early days of this Church, husbands have been considered the breadwinners of the family. I believe that no man can be considered a member in good standing who refuses to work to support his family if he is physically able to do so.

Conflict is work of the adversary

Now I indicated earlier that I did not know why there was so much conflict and hatred and bitterness in the world. Of course, I know that all of this is the work of the adversary. He works on us as individuals. He destroys strong men. From the time of the organization of this Church he has done so. President Wilford Woodruff said this:

"I have seen Oliver Cowdery when it seemed as though the earth trembled under his feet. I never heard a man bear a stronger testimony than he did when under the influence of the Spirit. But the moment he left the kingdom of God, that moment his power fell. . . . He was shorn of his strength, like Samson in the lap of Delilah. He lost the power and testimony which he had enjoyed, and he never recovered it again in its fulness while in the flesh, although he died [a member of] the Church" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 105).

One young man's experience

I have permission to tell you the story of a young man who grew up in our community. He was not a member of the Church. He and his parents were active in another faith.

He recalls that when he was growing up, some of his LDS associates belittled him, made him feel out of place, and poked fun at him.

He came to literally hate this Church and its people. He saw no good in any of them.

Then his father lost his employment and had to move. In the new location, at the age of 17, he was able to enroll in college. There, for the first time in his life, he felt the warmth of friends, one of whom, named Richard, asked him to join a club of which he was president. He writes:

“For the first time in my life someone wanted me around. I didn’t know how to react, but thankfully I joined. . . . It was a feeling that I loved, the feeling of having a friend. I had prayed for one my whole life. And now after 17 years of waiting, God answered that prayer.”

At the age of 19 he found himself as a tent partner with Richard during their summer employment. He noticed Richard reading a book every night. He asked what he was reading. He was told that he was reading the Book of Mormon. He adds:

“I quickly changed the subject and went to bed. After all, that is the book that ruined my childhood. I tried forgetting about it, but a week went by and I couldn’t sleep. Why was he reading it every night? I soon couldn’t stand the unanswered questions in my head. So one night I asked him what was so important in that book. What was in it? He handed me the book. I quickly stated that I never wanted to touch the book. I just wanted to know what was in there. He started to read where he had stopped. He read about Jesus and about an appearance in the Americas. I was shocked. I didn’t think that the Mormons believed in Jesus.”

Richard asked him to sing in a stake conference choir with him. The day came and the conference started. “Elder Gary J. Coleman from the First Quorum of the Seventy was the guest speaker. I found out during the conference that he also [was a convert]. At the end Richard proceeded to pull me by the arm up to talk to him. I finally agreed, and as I was approaching him he turned and smiled at me. I introduced myself and said that I wasn’t a member and that I had just come to sing in the choir. He smiled and said he was happy that I was there and stated that the music was great. I asked him how he knew the Church was true. He told me a short version of his testimony and asked if I had read the Book of Mormon. I said no. He

promised me that the first time I read it, I would feel the Spirit.”

On a subsequent occasion this young man and his friend were traveling. Richard handed him a Book of Mormon and asked that he read it aloud. He did so, and suddenly the inspiration of the Holy Spirit touched him.

Time passed and his faith increased. He agreed to be baptized. His parents opposed him, but he went forward and was baptized a member of this Church.

His testimony continues to strengthen. Only a few weeks ago he was married to a beautiful Latter-day Saint girl for time and eternity in the Salt Lake Temple. Elder Gary J. Coleman performed his sealing.

Need for kindness, respect, and love

That is the end of the story, but there are great statements in that story. One is the sorry manner in which his young Mormon associates treated him.

Next is the manner in which his new-found friend, Richard, treated him. It was totally opposite from his previous experience. It led to his conversion and baptism in the face of terrible odds.

This kind of miracle can happen and will happen when there is kindness, respect, and love. Why do any of us have to be so mean and unkind to others? Why can’t all of us reach out in friendship to everyone about us? Why is there so much bitterness and animosity? It is not a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Joseph Smith’s example of forgiving

We all stumble occasionally. We all make mistakes. I paraphrase the words of Jesus in the Lord’s Prayer: “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (see Matthew 6:12; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13).

William W. Phelps, who was close to the Prophet Joseph, betrayed him in 1838, which led to Joseph's incarceration in Missouri. Recognizing the great evil of the thing he had done, Brother Phelps wrote to the Prophet, asking forgiveness. The Prophet replied in part as follows:

"It is true, that we have suffered much in consequence of your behavior—the cup of gall, already full enough for mortals to drink, was indeed filled to overflowing when you turned against us. . . .

"However, the cup has been drunk, the will of our Father has been done, and we are yet alive, for which we thank the Lord. . . .

"Believing your confession to be real, and your repentance genuine, I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of fellowship, and rejoice over the returning prodigal.

"Your letter was read to the Saints last Sunday, and an expression of their feeling was taken, when it was unanimously Resolved, That W. W. Phelps should be received into fellowship.

"Come on, dear brother, since the war is past,

"For friends at first, are friends again at last' " (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 165–66).

Brethren, it is this spirit, expressed by the Prophet, which we must cultivate in our lives. We cannot be complacent about it. We are members of the Church of our Lord. We have an obligation to Him as well as to ourselves and others. This sinful old world so much needs men of strength, men of virtue, men of faith and righteousness, men willing to forgive and forget.

Examples of members' love and concern

Now, in concluding, I am pleased to note that the examples and stories I have given do not represent the actions and attitudes of the great majority of our peo-

ple. I see all around me a marvelous outpouring of love and concern for others.

A week ago this hall was filled with beautiful young women who are striving to live the gospel. They are generous toward one another. They seek to strengthen one another. They are a credit to their parents and the homes from which they come. They are approaching womanhood and will carry throughout their lives the ideals which presently motivate them.

Think of the vast good done by the women of the Relief Society. The shadow of their benevolent activities extends all across the world. Women reach down and give of their time, their loving care, and their resources to assist the sick and the poor.

Think of the welfare program with volunteers reaching out to supply food, clothing, and other needed items to those in distress.

Think of the far reaches of our humanitarian efforts in going beyond the membership of the Church to the poverty-ridden nations of the earth. The scourge of measles is being eradicated in many areas through the contributions of this Church.

Observe the workings of the Perpetual Education Fund in lifting thousands out of the slough of poverty and into the sunlight of knowledge and prosperity.

And thus I might go on reminding you of the vast efforts of the good people of this Church in blessing the lives of one another and with an outreach that extends across the world to the poor and distressed of the earth.

Radiate the light of the gospel

There is no end to the good we can do, to the influence we can have with others. Let us not dwell on the critical or the negative. Let us pray for strength; let us pray for capacity and desire to assist others. Let us radiate the light of the gospel

at all times and all places, that the Spirit of the Redeemer may radiate from us.

In the words of the Lord to Joshua, brethren, “be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God [will be] with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:9).

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Come, O Thou King of Kings.”

Elder Robert J. Whetten offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 176th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 2, 2006. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist. The choir sang “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” to begin the session. President Monson then made the following remarks.

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning to the fourth general session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders who are with us.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction

of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” and will now favor us with “He Sent His Son.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder H. Bryan Richards of the Seventy. Following the invocation, the choir will sing “I Stand All Amazed.”

The choir sang “He Sent His Son.”

Elder H. Bryan Richards offered the invocation.

The choir sang “I Stand All Amazed.”

President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, after which we shall hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will then sing “Redeemer of Israel.” At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Anne C. Pingree, second counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, will address us. Following her remarks, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us. The choir will then sing “O Lord Most Holy.”

President James E. Faust

The fulness of the restored gospel

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we care about all of God's children who now live or who have ever lived upon the earth. "Our message," as stated by the First Presidency in 1978, "is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father."¹ As Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated a few years ago:

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has many beliefs in common with other Christian churches. But we have differences, and those differences explain why we send missionaries to other Christians, why we build temples in addition to churches, and why our beliefs bring us such happiness and strength to deal with the challenges of life and death."²

I wish to testify today of the fulness of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, which adds to the religious beliefs of other denominations, both Christian and non-Christian. This fulness was originally established by the Savior in His earthly ministry. But then there was a falling away.

The Apostasy

Some of the early Apostles knew that an apostasy would occur before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote concerning this event, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.*"³

With this falling away, priesthood keys were lost, and some precious doctrines of the Church organized by the Savior were changed. Among these were baptism by immersion;⁴ receiving the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands;⁵ the nature of the

Godhead—that They are three distinct personages;⁶ all mankind will be resurrected through the Atonement of Christ, "both . . . the just and [the] unjust";⁷ continuous revelation—that the heavens are not closed;⁸ and temple work for the living and the dead.⁹

The period that followed came to be known as the Dark Ages. This falling away was foreseen by the Apostle Peter, who declared that "heaven must receive [Jesus Christ] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."¹⁰ Restitution would only be necessary if these precious things had been lost.

The Reformation

In the centuries that followed, religious men came to recognize that there had been a gradual falling away from the Church organized by Jesus Christ. Some of them suffered greatly for their beliefs, in what came to be called the Reformation, a 16th-century movement that aimed at reforming Western Christianity. This resulted in the separation of the Protestant churches from the main Christian church.

Among these reformers was the Reverend John Lathrop, vicar of the Egerton Church in Kent, England. Incidentally, the Prophet Joseph Smith was descended from John Lathrop. In 1623 the Reverend Lathrop resigned his position because he questioned the authority of the Anglican church to act in the name of God. As he read the Bible, he recognized that apostolic keys were not on the earth. In 1632 he became the minister of an illegal independent church and was put in prison. His wife died while he was in prison, and his orphaned children pleaded with the bishop for his release. The bishop agreed to release Lathrop on condition that he

leave the country. This he did, and with 32 members of his congregation he sailed to America.¹¹

Roger Williams, a 17th-century pastor who founded Rhode Island, refused to continue as pastor in Providence on the grounds that there was “no regularly-constituted Church on earth, nor any person authorized to administer any Church ordinance; nor could there be, until new apostles were sent by the great Head of the Church, for whose coming he was seeking.”¹²

These are but two of the religious scholars who recognized an apostasy from the Church organized by Jesus Christ and the need for a restoration of the priesthood keys that had been lost. The Apostle John saw in vision the time when “another angel [would] fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”¹³ This prophecy has been fulfilled. Because we believe the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in our time by the Prophet Joseph Smith, we wish to give all people an opportunity to know and accept this message.

Restoration of priesthood and keys

We now have in the restored Church apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists, as spoken of by Paul to the Ephesians.¹⁴ These priesthood offices were established by the Savior when He organized His Church in the meridian of time. We recognize the two orders of the priesthood and the offices contained within them: the lesser priesthood is the Aaronic Priesthood, named after Aaron; and the greater priesthood is the Melchizedek Priesthood, named after Melchizedek, to whom Abraham paid tithes. The Aaronic Priesthood was restored on May 15, 1829, under the hands of John the Baptist, and the Melchizedek Priesthood within a month under the hands of the an-

cient Apostles Peter, James, and John to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Thus those possessing the priesthood today claim the power to act in the name of God through the priesthood, “which power commands respect both on earth and in heaven.”¹⁵

In the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836, Moses appeared and gave the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the keys of the gathering of Israel. After this, Elias appeared and committed the gospel of Abraham, that in “our seed all generations after us should be blessed.”¹⁶ After this, Elijah the prophet appeared and gave to them the keys of this dispensation, including the sealing power, to bind in heaven that which is bound on earth within the temples.¹⁷ Thus, prophets of previous gospel dispensations presented their keys to the Prophet Joseph Smith in this, the “dispensation of the fulness of times” spoken of by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians.¹⁸

Establishment of tithing

I am grateful the Lord has seen fit to establish again the law of tithes and offerings for this people. When we keep the law of tithing, the windows of heaven open for us. Great are the blessings poured down upon those who have the faith to keep the law of tithing.

Temple blessings available again

Through the earth’s long history, temple worship has been a significant part of the Saints’ worship, by which they show their desire to come closer to their Creator. The temple was a place of learning for the Savior when He was on the earth; it was very much a part of His life. Temple blessings are available once again in our day. A unique feature of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is its teaching concerning temples and the eternal significance of all that occurs within

them. Our majestic and beautiful temples now dot much of the earth. In them the most sacred work is done.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated, “Temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are sacred structures in which [man’s] eternal questions are answered.”¹⁹ The solemn mysteries of where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going are answered more fully in the temples. We came from God’s presence and are here on earth to prepare to return to His presence.

Of transcendent significance is that within the sacred walls of the temple, husbands and wives make eternal covenants. These covenants are sealed by priesthood authority. Children of that union, if they are worthy, may enjoy an eternal relationship as part of a family and as children of God. As the Apostle John wrote: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? . . . Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.”²⁰

The Lord has said that His work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”²¹ It follows then that all mankind, living and dead, should have the opportunity of hearing the gospel either in this life or in the spirit world. As Paul said to the Corinthians, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”²² This is the reason we do ordinance work in temples for our deceased ancestors. No person’s choice or agency is taken away. Those for whom the work is done may accept it or not, as they choose.

Coming forth of the Book of Mormon

The Apostle John saw in vision the time when an angel would come to the earth as part of the Restoration of the gospel. That angel was Moroni, who appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith. He directed

Joseph to the place where golden plates containing ancient writings were deposited. Joseph Smith then translated these plates by the gift and power of God, and the Book of Mormon was published. This is a record of two groups of people who lived centuries ago on the American continent. Little was known about them before the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. But more importantly, the Book of Mormon is another testament of Christ. It restored precious truths concerning the Fall, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and life after death.

Latter-day revelation

Prior to the Restoration, the heavens had been closed for centuries. But with prophets and apostles upon the earth once more, the heavens were opened once again with visions and revelations. Many of the revelations that came to the Prophet Joseph Smith were written down in a book that came to be known as the Doctrine and Covenants. This contains further insights about principles and ordinances and is a valuable source concerning the structure of the priesthood. In addition, we have another canon of scripture called the Pearl of Great Price. It contains the book of Moses, which came by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the book of Abraham, which he translated from a purchased Egyptian scroll. From these we learn not only a great deal more about Moses, Abraham, Enoch, and other prophets but also many more details about the Creation. We learn that the gospel of Jesus Christ was taught to all of the prophets from the beginning—even from the time of Adam.²³

Restored gospel calls for respect for others

We believe The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a restoration of the original Church established by Jesus

Christ, which was built “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”²⁴ It is not a break-off from any other church.

We believe that the fulness of the gospel of Christ has been restored, but this is no reason for anyone to feel superior in any way toward others of God’s children. Rather, it requires a greater obligation to invoke the essence of the gospel of Christ in our lives—to love, serve, and bless others. Indeed, as the First Presidency stated in 1978, we believe that “the great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals.”²⁵ Thus, we have respect for the sincere religious beliefs of others and appreciate others extending the same courtesy and respect for the tenets we hold dear.

I have a personal witness of the truth of the covenants, teachings, and authority restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. This assurance has been with me all of my life. I am grateful that the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel has taken place in our time. It contains the pathway to eternal life. May the strength, peace, and concern of God the Father and the abiding love and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. “Statement of the First Presidency regarding God’s Love for All Mankind,” Feb. 15, 1978.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 112; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 84.
3. 2 Thessalonians 2:3; italics added.
4. See Mark 1:9–10.
5. See Acts 8:14–17; 19:3–6.
6. See Matthew 3:17; Acts 7:55; Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
7. Acts 24:15.
8. See Daniel 2:28; Amos 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 121:26.
9. See Obadiah 1:21; Malachi 4:6; 1 Corinthians 15:29; Revelation 7:15.
10. Acts 3:20–21.
11. See Mark E. Petersen, *The Great Prologue* (1975), 34–35.
12. See William Cullen Bryant, ed., *Picturesque America; or, the Land We Live In*, 2 vols. (1872–74), 1:502; see also LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, rev. ed. (1966), 29.
13. Revelation 14:6.
14. See Ephesians 4:11.
15. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (1924), 204.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 110:12.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16.
18. Ephesians 1:10.
19. “Why These Temples?” in *Temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1999), 14.
20. Revelation 7:13, 15.
21. Moses 1:39.
22. 1 Corinthians 15:29.
23. See Moses 5:58; 8:19; Abraham 2:10–11.
24. Ephesians 2:20.
25. First Presidency statement, Feb. 15, 1978.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“Blessed are the poor in spirit”

The first words Jesus spoke in His majestic Sermon on the Mount were to the troubled, the discouraged and downhearted. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,”

He said, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”¹ Whether you are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or among the tens of thousands listening this morning who are not of our faith, I speak to those who are facing per-

sonal trials and family struggles, those who endure conflicts fought in the lonely foxholes of the heart, those trying to hold back floodwaters of despair that sometimes wash over us like a tsunami of the soul. I wish to speak particularly to you who feel your lives are broken, seemingly beyond repair.

“Come unto me”

To all such I offer the surest and sweetest remedy that I know. It is found in the clarion call the Savior of the world Himself gave. He said it in the beginning of His ministry, and He said it in the end. He said it to believers, and He said it to those who were not so sure. He said it to everyone, whatever their personal problems might be:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”²

In this promise, that introductory phrase, “come unto me,” is crucial. It is the key to the peace and rest we seek. Indeed, when the resurrected Savior gave His sermon at the temple to the Nephites in the New World, He began, “Blessed are the poor in spirit who *come unto me*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”³

When Andrew and John first heard Christ speak, they were so moved they followed Him as He walked away from the crowd. Sensing He was being pursued, Jesus turned and asked the two men, “What seek ye?” They answered, “Where dwellest thou?” And Christ said, “Come and see.” The next day He found another disciple, Philip, and said to him, “Follow me.”⁴ Just a short time later He formally called Peter and others of the new Apostles with the same spirit of invitation. Come, “follow me,”⁵ He said.

It seems clear that the essence of our duty and the fundamental requirement of our mortal life is captured in these brief

phrases from any number of scenes in the Savior’s mortal ministry. He is saying to us, “Trust me, learn of me, do what I do. Then, when you walk where *I* am going,” He says, “we can talk about where *you* are going and the problems you face and the troubles you have. If you will follow me, I will lead you out of darkness,” He promises. “I will give you answers to your prayers. I will give you rest to your souls.”

My beloved friends, I know of no other way for us to succeed or to be safe amid life’s many pitfalls and problems. I know of no other way for us to carry our burdens or find what Jacob in the Book of Mormon called “that happiness which is prepared for the saints.”⁶

Exercising faith

So how does one “come unto Christ” in response to this constant invitation? The scriptures give scores of examples and avenues. You are well acquainted with the most basic ones. The easiest and the earliest comes simply with the desire of our heart, the most basic form of faith that we know. “If ye can no more than *desire* to believe,” Alma says, exercising just “a *particle* of faith,” giving even a *small place* for the promises of God to find a home—that is enough to begin.⁷ Just believing, just having a “molecule” of faith—simply hoping for things which are not yet seen in our lives, but which are nevertheless truly there to be bestowed⁸—that simple step, when focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, has ever been and always will be the first principle of His eternal gospel, the first step out of despair.

Changing what we can by repentance

Second, we must change anything we can change that may be part of the problem. In short, we must repent, perhaps the most hopeful and encouraging word in the Christian vocabulary. We thank our Father in Heaven we are *allowed* to change,

we thank Jesus we *can* change, and ultimately we do so only with Their divine assistance. Certainly not everything we struggle with is a result of our actions. Often it is the result of the actions of others or just the mortal events of life. But anything we can change we *should* change, and we must forgive the rest. In this way our access to the Savior's Atonement becomes as unimpeded as we, with our imperfections, can make it. He will take it from there.

Taking upon us the name of Christ

Third, in as many ways as possible we try to take upon us His identity, and we begin by taking upon us His name. That name is formally bestowed by covenant in the saving ordinances of the gospel. These start with baptism and conclude with temple covenants, with many others, such as partaking of the sacrament, laced throughout our lives as additional blessings and reminders. Teaching the people of his day the message we give this morning, Nephi said:

"Follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, . . . with real intent, . . . take upon you the name of Christ. . . . Do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer [will] do."⁹

Following these most basic teachings, a splendor of connections to Christ opens up to us in multitudinous ways: prayer and fasting and meditation upon His purposes, savoring the scriptures, giving service to others, "succor[ing] the weak, lift[ing] up the hands which hang down, . . . strengthen[ing] the feeble knees."¹⁰ Above all else, loving with "the pure love of Christ," that gift that "never faileth," that gift that "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, [and] endureth all things."¹¹ Soon, with that kind of love, we realize our days hold scores of thoroughfares leading to the Master and that every time we reach out, however feebly, for Him, we discover He has been anxiously trying to reach us.

So we step, we strive, we seek, and we never yield.¹²

My desire today is for *all* of us—not just those who are "poor in spirit" but *all* of us—to have more straightforward personal experience with the Savior's example. Sometimes we seek heaven too obliquely, focusing on programs or history or the experience of others. Those are important but not as important as personal experience, true discipleship, and the strength that comes from experiencing firsthand the majesty of His touch.

Trust in the Lord's promises

Are you battling a demon of addiction—tobacco or drugs or gambling, or the pernicious contemporary plague of pornography? Is your marriage in trouble or your child in danger? Are you confused with gender identity or searching for self-esteem? Do you, or someone you love, face disease or depression or death? Whatever other steps you may need to take to resolve these concerns, come *first* to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Trust in heaven's promises. In that regard Alma's testimony is my testimony: "I do know," he says, "that whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions."¹³

This reliance upon the merciful nature of God is at the very center of the gospel Christ taught. I testify that the Savior's Atonement lifts from us not only the burden of our sins but also the burden of our disappointments and sorrows, our heartaches and our despair.¹⁴ From the beginning, trust in such help was to give us both a reason and a way to improve, an incentive to lay down our burdens and take up our salvation. There can and will be plenty of difficulties in life. Nevertheless, the soul that comes unto Christ, who knows His voice and strives to do as He did, finds a strength, as the hymn says, "beyond [his] own."¹⁵ The Savior reminds us that He has "graven [us] upon the

palms of [His] hands.”¹⁶ Considering the incomprehensible cost of the Crucifixion and Atonement, I promise you He is not going to turn His back on us now. When He says to the poor in spirit, “Come unto me,” He means He knows the way out and He knows the way up. He knows it because He has walked it. He knows the way because He *is* the way.

“Be not afraid”

Brothers and sisters, whatever your distress, *please* don’t give up and *please* don’t yield to fear. I have always been touched that as his son was departing for his mission to England, Brother Bryant S. Hinckley gave young Gordon a farewell embrace and then slipped him a handwritten note with just five words taken from the fifth chapter of Mark: “Be not afraid, only believe.”¹⁷ I think also of that night when Christ rushed to the aid of His frightened disciples, walking as He did on the water to get to them, calling out, “It is I; be not afraid.” Peter exclaimed, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.”

Christ’s answer to him was as it *always* is *every* time: “*Come*,” He said. Instantly, as was his nature, Peter sprang over the vessel’s side and into the troubled waters. While his eyes were fixed upon the Lord, the wind could toss his hair and the spray could drench his robes, but all was well—he was coming to Christ. It was only when his faith wavered and fear took control, only when he removed his glance from the Master to look at the furious waves and the ominous black gulf beneath, only then did he begin to sink into the sea. In newer terror he cried out, “Lord, save me.”

Undoubtedly with some sadness, the Master over every problem and fear, He who is the solution to every discouragement and disappointment, stretched out His hand and grasped the drowning disciple with the gentle rebuke, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”¹⁸

The broken can be mended

If you are lonely, please know you can find comfort. If you are discouraged, please know you can find hope. If you are poor in spirit, please know you can be strengthened. If you feel you are broken, please know you can be mended.

In Nazareth, the narrow road,
That tires the feet and steals the
breath,
Passes the place where once abode
The Carpenter of Nazareth.

And up and down the dusty way
The village folk would often wend;
And on the bench, beside Him, lay
Their broken things for Him to mend.

The maiden with the doll she broke,
The woman with the broken chair,
The man with broken plough, or yoke,
Said, “Can you mend it, Carpenter?”

And each received the thing he sought,
In yoke, or plough, or chair, or doll;
The broken thing which each had
brought

Returned again a perfect whole.

So, up the hill the long years through,
With heavy step and wistful eye,
The burdened souls their way pursue,
Uttering each the plaintive cry:

“O Carpenter of Nazareth,
This heart, that’s broken past repair,
This life, that’s shattered nigh to death,
Oh, can You mend them, Carpenter?”

And by His kind and ready hand,
His own sweet life is woven through
Our broken lives, until they stand
A New Creation—“all things new.”

“The shattered [substance] of [the]
heart,
Desire, ambition, hope, and faith,
Mould Thou into the perfect part,
O, Carpenter of Nazareth!”¹⁹

May we all, especially the poor in spirit, come unto Him and be made whole,

I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, amen.

NOTES

1. Matthew 5:3.
2. Matthew 11:28–29.
3. 3 Nephi 12:3; italics added.
4. John 1:35–39, 43.
5. Matthew 4:19.
6. 2 Nephi 9:43.
7. See Alma 32:27; italics added.
8. See Alma 32:21.
9. 2 Nephi 31:13, 17.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
11. See Moroni 7:45–47.
12. See Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Ulysses,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson* (1898), 89.
13. Alma 36:3.
14. See Alma 7:11–12.
15. “Lord, I Would Follow Thee,” *Hymns*, no. 220.
16. 1 Nephi 21:16.
17. Mark 5:36.
18. Matthew 14:27–31; italics added.
19. George Blair, “The Carpenter of Nazareth,” in Obert C. Tanner, *Christ’s Ideals for Living* (Sunday School manual, 1955), 22.

Elder Earl C. Tingey

The great plan of happiness

The prophet Jacob asked, “Why not speak of the atonement of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him?”¹

I take that question as the subject of my talk—why not speak of the Atonement of Jesus Christ?

Alma refers to the Atonement as “the great plan of happiness.”² I shall use that phrase to describe the beautiful doctrine we know as the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

President Hugh B. Brown, in speaking of the immortality of the soul, and man’s relationship to Deity, said: “Sooner or later life’s vicissitudes bring each of us to grips with this important subject. . . . Each of us, regardless of color, creed, or nationality, has a rendezvous with the experience that we call death.”³

Most of us, in sorrow and loss, have reverently stood at the grave of a loved one and asked the question, “Is there any happiness in death?”

A Book of Mormon prophet answers this question for us with joyful expressions of thanksgiving for the Atonement of Jesus Christ, which ransoms us from death: “O the wisdom of God, his mercy and

grace! . . . O the greatness and the justice of our God!”⁴

Let me share five truths of the great plan of happiness that have brought this kind of joy to me.

Reality of the Father and the Son

First: A knowledge of the plan confirms that there is a God and He has a Son, Jesus Christ. The Father and the Son are perfect. They live in heaven, and They possess glorified bodies of spirit, flesh, and bones.

These truths were revealed to us in this dispensation when the boy Joseph Smith knelt in humble prayer and later declared: “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*”⁵

Purpose of mortal life

Second: Knowing the identity of the Father and the Son helps us know that all of us are placed on earth to acquire a

physical body, gain experience, and prove ourselves worthy to return to our Heavenly Father. Laws govern our mortal life on earth. When we transgress the law, we sin. When we sin, we break eternal laws; the law of justice requires a penalty or a punishment.

Sin and the need to repent might be represented by a man who takes a journey. On his back is a large empty bag. From time to time, he picks up a rock, representing the transgression of a law. He places the rock in the bag on his back. Over time, the bag becomes full. It is heavy. The man cannot continue on his journey. He must have a way to empty the bag and remove the rocks. This can be done only by the Savior through the Atonement.

This is possible when we exercise faith in Jesus Christ, forsake sin, and make covenants through the ordinances of the gospel. As we faithfully endure to the end, we can then return to live with our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The eternal law of mercy

Third: Through the infinite Atonement, God has provided a means whereby we can both overcome our sins and become completely clean again. This is made possible by the eternal law of mercy. Mercy satisfies the claims of justice through our repentance and the power of the Atonement. Without the power of the Atonement and our complete repentance, we are subject to the law of justice.

Alma taught that “mercy claimeth the penitent”⁶ and that “the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance.”⁷

The great prophet Amulek taught, “And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repen-

tance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.”⁸

Adam and Eve, our first parents, transgressed law and were cast out of the beautiful Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were taught the great plan of salvation that they might find happiness in this life.⁹

Adam said, “For because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.”¹⁰

Eve uttered a similar acclamation of happiness: “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption.”¹¹

Overcoming physical and spiritual death

Fourth: The Fall of Adam and Eve brought about two deaths. We are subject to those deaths.

Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the physical body. Because of the Fall of Adam, all mankind will suffer physical death.

The second death is spiritual. It is separation from God’s presence. Adam and Eve freely conversed with God in the Garden of Eden. After their transgression, they lost that privilege. Thereafter, communication from God came only through faith and sacrifice, combined with heartfelt petitioning.

Currently we are all in the state of spiritual death. We are separated from God. He dwells in heaven; we live on earth. We would like to return to Him. He is clean and perfect. We are unclean and imperfect.

The power of Christ’s Atonement overcame both deaths.

Following His Crucifixion and burial in a borrowed tomb, Christ was resurrected on the third day. This Resurrection reunited Christ’s physical body with His spirit.

The Resurrection from the dead is a most beautiful aspect of the Atonement and truly a part of the plan of happiness; the Resurrection is universal and applies to the entire human family. We will all be resurrected. I bear testimony of that fact and truth. This is an unconditional gift from God.

But to be resurrected does not overcome the second death. To gain eternal life and live in the presence of the Father and the Son, we must repent and become eligible for mercy, which will satisfy justice.

The revelations teach:

“This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God.”¹²

“Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance.”¹³

“That same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world.”¹⁴

Condescension of Christ

Fifth: Jesus Christ was born of an earthly mother, Mary. From her, He inherited mortality and became subject to death.

Joseph was His earthly mentor. God in heaven was His Father. From Him, He inherited immortality, the power to overcome physical death.

As the one who was chosen to fulfill the requirements of the Atonement, Jesus Christ condescended to come to earth and be born as a helpless babe to Mary. He condescended to be tempted, tried, mocked, judged, and crucified, even though He had power and authority to prevent such actions.

President John Taylor described the condescension of Christ in these beautiful words: “It was further necessary that He should descend below all things, in order that He might raise others above all things; for if He could not raise Himself and be exalted through those principles

brought about by the atonement, He could not raise others; He could not do for others what He could not do for Himself.”¹⁵

Christ’s suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane epitomizes the most magnificent of all the attributes of Christ, His perfect love. Here we see that He truly loved all of us.

An English theologian, writing in the 19th century, said of this event: “All that the human frame can tolerate of suffering was to be heaped upon His shrinking body. . . . Pain in its acutest sting, shame in its most overwhelming brutality, all the burden of . . . sin . . . —this was what He must now face.”¹⁶

Describing His suffering, the Lord said in modern revelation, “Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit.”¹⁷

The Atonement is an event that enables us to be reconciled to God. The word *atonement*, or “at-one-ment,” means to restore or to come back. In terms of family, it means to be reunited with one another and with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. It means sadness through separation will become happiness through reuniting.

In conclusion, I share the words of President Boyd K. Packer:

“If you understand the great plan of happiness and follow it, what goes on in the world will not determine your happiness.”¹⁸

I bear testimony of that truth and of the love that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has shown for us by providing the Atonement, the great plan of happiness, for all of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Jacob 4:12.
2. Alma 42:8; see also 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 12:32; 34:9, 16; 41:2; 42:15; Moses 6:62.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1967, 48.

4. 2 Nephi 9:8, 17.
5. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
6. Alma 42:23.
7. Alma 42:13.
8. Alma 34:16.
9. See Alma 12:32.
10. Moses 5:10.
11. Moses 5:11.
12. Alma 34:32.
13. Alma 34:33.
14. Alma 34:34.

15. *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882), 144.
16. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (1994), 575.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.
18. In Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 26; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 20.

The choir and congregation sang
“Redeemer of Israel.”

Sister Anne C. Pingree

Growing up unto the Lord

Some months ago I rode in a car with two courageous senior sister missionaries. They were determined to find a ward member’s apartment in the heart of an inner-city neighborhood in the eastern United States. As I sat in the backseat holding my breath, the car’s guidance system regularly blared, “Wrong turn, wrong turn!” Undaunted, the missionary reading the map just kept suggesting way after way through the maze of city streets until finally we found the home of the sister whom they had promised to teach how to read and write.

In their actions and attitudes, these remarkable sisters embodied something that is much more than a reflection of their mortal years. They demonstrated true spiritual maturity.

Helaman, the great Book of Mormon prophet, named his sons Nephi and Lehi after their forebears, and “they began to grow up unto the Lord.”¹ Young or older, all of us must do the same.

This idea of growing up unto the Lord is a compelling one. Unlike the process of growing up physically, we will not mature spiritually until we *choose*, as the Apostle Paul phrased it, to “put away childish things.”²

Daily prayer and scripture study, adherence to commandments and to cov-

enants made at baptism and in the temple are at the core of growing up unto the Lord. We learn to walk in His ways as we do what draws us closer to Heavenly Father and as we teach our children and others to do the same. We “put away childish things” as we choose to become Christlike and serve others as He would have us do.

Determined service to others

When the Church was organized in this dispensation, the Lord explained that those who “shall be received by baptism into his church” would be, in part, those “willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.”³ That means remaining “steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works”⁴ each day of our lives. Today, as the Church grows in 170 nations throughout the earth, *determined service to others*, even in difficult circumstances, is required of those who truly desire “to grow up unto the Lord.” This expansion of the Church means many of us will have opportunities to serve those who are new converts.

I participated in a memorable example of such determined service to those who are new to the gospel when I accompanied those dedicated sister missionaries—one a widow close to 80 years and the other a single parent in her 60s—who

would not be deterred by wrong turns. I also witnessed another example of it in that same ward.

Service of a visiting teaching mentor

This ward is composed of members of many ages, from a variety of countries, all with varying economic circumstances and Church experience. A number of those with the most Church experience are busy graduate-student couples with demanding schedules and young families.

What I saw was a young mother serving as a visiting teaching mentor to newer converts in the ward. While her husband cared for their baby, she enthusiastically modeled loving watchcare to two African sisters. This watchcare involved teaching these sisters not only how to function in a new country but also how to adapt to their new religion.

Through her example she taught these African sisters how the Lord would have us serve each other. The words of the Apostle Paul tenderly describe what I saw in this visiting teaching mentor's actions toward these new converts: "We were gentle among you, . . . being affectionately desirous of you, . . . willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were *dear* unto us."⁵ With each visit, the young mentor brought good cheer, a gentle helping hand, and the visiting teaching message.

In time, together the sisters prepared the visiting teaching message to share in other sisters' homes. Assessing needs, giving on-the-spot service as they went, they became true Relief Society sisters committed to lifting, comforting, and encouraging one another. I doubt I will ever hear the phrase "hearts knit together in unity and in love"⁶ that I won't think of those three happy, loving women demonstrating through their determined service to others what it means "to grow up unto the Lord."

Willingness to press forward in faith

Besides steadfast, determined service, another way we choose to grow up unto the Lord is through *our willingness to "press forward" in faith*—even when we don't quite know what to do. Consider Nephi's account of being commanded to build a ship. He recounted the circumstance:

"And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee. . . .

"And I said: Lord, whither shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools?"⁸

Nephi did not question the task to be done. Rather, in this situation, he evidenced, as he had in others, this mature spiritual insight: "And thus we see that the commandments of God must be fulfilled. And if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them."⁹ In short, Nephi looked for a resolution rather than at the roadblocks, because he knew—he *knew*—that in this process of growing up unto the Lord, God could and would help him fulfill every commandment he received.

Faith of a bishop

In that same inner-city ward I observed a similar type of faith in the gentle, loving care of a bishop who wasted no time despairing over the vast needs of an ever-growing number of new converts. Rather, he pressed forward by rallying the more experienced members of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums to help prepare new converts from Africa and Latin America for their priesthood responsibilities. The newer brethren were taught how to hold the trays while passing the sacrament, how to kneel and rever-

ently bless the bread and water. Their more seasoned, often younger brethren practiced along with them the words of the sacramental prayers so they would feel confident in giving them. Then, together, all the brethren discussed the sacred nature of this important priesthood ordinance.

We've all had experiences where we've had to demonstrate our determination to serve others and our willingness to press forward in faith. When my husband telephoned to tell me that our mission call had been changed to a challenging assignment in Africa, I responded, "I can do that. I think I can do that." I demonstrated by my words my commitment to move forward in faith—trusting once again that the Lord would help me. I was showing my willingness "to grow up unto the Lord."

As that faithful bishop, those dedicated sisters, and I might attest, in this ongoing process of growing up unto the Lord, we will be asked to do all we can, in some cases even more than we know how to do. The challenges may be formidable

and the route sometimes unknown. But inevitable wrong turns notwithstanding, those who strive to be truly Christlike—with steadfast determination to serve others and a willingness to press forward in faith—can come to echo this grand spiritual truth shared by Nephi as he continued his shipbuilding: "And I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things."¹⁰ To be shown "great things"—what a gift, what a blessing to those who have chosen "to grow up unto the Lord." May ours be lives of gentle, loving, steadfast spiritual maturity, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Helaman 3:21.
2. 1 Corinthians 13:11.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.
4. Mosiah 5:15.
5. 1 Thessalonians 2:7–8; italics added.
6. Mosiah 18:21.
7. 2 Nephi 31:20; italics added.
8. 1 Nephi 17:8–9.
9. 1 Nephi 17:3.
10. 1 Nephi 18:3.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Benefits of reading the Book of Mormon

Last year, at the invitation of a prophet, millions read the Book of Mormon. Millions benefited. For each of us there were blessings of obedience, and most of us also grew in knowledge and testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom this book is a witness.

Many other things were learned, but what was learned depended on the reader. What we get from a book, especially a sacred text, is mostly dependent on what we take to its reading—in desire and readiness to learn, and in attunement to the light communicated by the Spirit of the Lord.

All men everywhere

One of the things I learned in this most recent reading of the Book of Mormon was how much God loves all of His children in every nation. In the first chapter Father Lehi praises the Lord, whose "power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth" (1 Nephi 1:14). Again and again the Book of Mormon teaches that the gospel of Jesus Christ is universal in its promise and effect, reaching out to all who ever live on the earth. Here are some examples, quoted directly from that book:

- “The atonement . . . was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, . . . or who ever shall be” (Mosiah 4:7).

- “And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, . . . all men are redeemed” (Mormon 9:13).

- “He suffereth the pains of all . . . , both men, women, and children. . . . And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men” (2 Nephi 9:21–22).

- “Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? . . . Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and . . . all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (2 Nephi 26:27–28).

We also read that “his blood atoneth for the sins of those . . . who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned” (Mosiah 3:11). Similarly, “the blood of Christ atoneth for [little children]” (Mosiah 3:16). These teachings that the resurrecting and cleansing power of the Atonement is for all contradict the assertion that the grace of God saves only a chosen few. His grace is for all. These teachings of the Book of Mormon expand our vision and enlarge our understanding of the all-encompassing love of God and the universal effect of His Atonement for all men everywhere.

“Bond and free”

The Book of Mormon teaches that our Savior “inviteth [all the children of men] to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33; see also Alma 5:49).

“He inviteth them all.” We understand “male and female.” We also understand “black and white,” which means all races.

But what about “bond and free”? *Bond*—the opposite of free—means more than slavery. It means being bound (in bondage) to anything from which it is difficult to escape. *Bond* includes those whose freedom is restricted by physical or emotional afflictions. *Bond* includes those who are addicted to some substance or practice. *Bond* surely refers to those who are imprisoned by sin—“encircled about” by what another teaching of the Book of Mormon calls “the chains of hell” (Alma 5:7). *Bond* includes those who are held down by traditions or customs contrary to the commandments of God (see Matthew 15:3–6; Mark 7:7–9; D&C 74:4–7; 93:39). Finally, *bond* also includes those who are confined within the boundaries of other erroneous ideas. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that we preach to “liberate the captives.”¹ Our Savior “inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; . . . he denieth none that come unto him . . . ; and all are alike unto God.”

Promised manifestations of the Lord

The children of God in all nations have His promise that He will manifest Himself to them. The Book of Mormon tells us:

“He manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him, by the power of the Holy Ghost; yea, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, working mighty miracles, signs, and wonders, among the children of men according to their faith” (2 Nephi 26:13).

Note that these promised manifestations of the Lord are to “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.” Today we are seeing the fulfillment of that promise in every nation where our missionaries are permitted to labor, even among peoples we have not previously associated with Christianity.

For example, we know of many cases where the Lord has been manifesting Himself to men and women in the nation of

Russia, so recently released from the long grip of godless communism. While reading critical or mocking articles about Mormons, two different Russian men felt a strong impression to search out our meeting places. Both met missionaries and joined the Church.²

A medical doctor in a village in Nigeria had a dream in which he saw his good friend speaking to a congregation. Intrigued, he traveled to his friend's village on a Sunday and was astonished to find exactly what he had seen in his dream—a congregation called a ward being taught by his friend, who was their bishop. Impressed with what he heard in repeated visits, he and his wife were taught and baptized. Two months later over 30 others in their village had also joined the Church, and their clinic had become the meeting place.

A man I met from northern India had never even heard the name of Jesus Christ until he saw it on a calendar in the shop of a shoemaker. The Spirit led him to conversion in a Protestant church. Later, during a visit to a distant college town, he saw an advertisement for an American group called “The BYU Young Ambassadors.” During their performance, an inner voice told him to go into the lobby after the program and a man in a blue blazer would tell him what to do. In this way he obtained a Book of Mormon, read it, and was converted to the restored gospel. He has since served as a missionary and as a bishop.

A little girl in Thailand felt a memory of a loving Father in Heaven. As she grew older, she would often pray and counsel with Him in her heart. In her early 20s she met our missionaries. Their teachings confirmed the loving personal feelings for God she remembered from her childhood. She was baptized and served a full-time mission in Thailand.

Only 5 percent of the people in Cambodia are Christians. A family in that country was searching for the truth. While

their 11-year-old son was riding his bicycle he saw some men in white shirts and ties showing someone a picture and asking who it was. He felt he should stop. As he watched, he was prompted to say, “That is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and He came to save man.” Then he rode away. It took the missionaries a month to find him and his family. Today, the father is a counselor in the mission presidency.

Last June, a family of five visited the open house for a new chapel in Mongolia. As the father walked through the door a powerful force went through his body, a feeling of peace he had never experienced before. Tears flowed. He asked the missionaries what that amazing feeling was and how he could feel it again. Soon, the entire family was baptized.³

These are only a few examples. There are thousands more.

Being subject to the Savior

The Book of Mormon also teaches that the great Creator died “for all men, that all men might become subject unto him” (2 Nephi 9:5). Being subject to our Savior means that if our sins are to be forgiven through His Atonement, we must comply with the conditions He has prescribed, including faith, repentance, and baptism. The fulfillment of these conditions depends on our desires, our choices, and our actions. “He cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice” (2 Nephi 9:21).

The Lord provides a way for all His children, and He desires that each of us come unto Him. In the closing chapter of the Book of Mormon, Moroni pleads, “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32).

The Abrahamic covenant

The Bible tells us how God made a covenant with Abraham and promised him that through him all “families” or “nations” of the earth would be blessed (see Genesis 12:3; 22:18). What we call the Abrahamic covenant opens the door for God’s choicest blessings to all of His children everywhere. The Bible teaches that “if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29; see also Abraham 2:10). The Book of Mormon promises that all who receive and act upon the Lord’s invitation to “repent and believe in his Son” become “the covenant people of the Lord” (2 Nephi 30:2). This is a potent reminder that neither riches nor lineage nor any other privileges of birth should cause us to believe that we are “better one than another” (Alma 5:54; see also Jacob 3:9). Indeed, the Book of Mormon commands, “Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another” (Mosiah 23:7).

The Bible teaches that some of Abraham’s descendants would be scattered “into all the kingdoms of the earth,” “among all nations,” and from “one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deuteronomy 28:25, 37, 64). The Book of Mormon affirms this teaching, declaring that the descendants of Abraham would be “scattered upon all the face of the earth, and . . . among all nations” (1 Nephi 22:3).

The Book of Mormon adds to our knowledge of how our Savior’s earthly ministry reached out to all of His scattered flock. In addition to His ministry in what we now call the Middle East, the Book of Mormon records His appearance and teachings to the Nephites on the American continent (see 3 Nephi 11–28). There He repeated that the Father had commanded Him to visit the other sheep which were not of the land of Jerusalem (see 3 Nephi 16:1; John 10:16). He also said that He would visit others “who [had] not as yet

heard [His] voice” (see 3 Nephi 16:2–3). As prophesied centuries earlier (see 2 Nephi 29:12), the Savior told His followers in the Americas that He was going “to show [Himself]” to these “lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them” (3 Nephi 17:4).

The Book of Mormon is a great witness that the Lord loves all people everywhere. It declares that “he shall manifest himself unto all nations” (1 Nephi 13:42).

“Know ye not that there are more nations than one?” the Lord said through the prophet Nephi. “Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?” (2 Nephi 29:7).

Similarly, the prophet Alma taught that “the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have” (Alma 29:8).

Nations commanded to write Lord’s words

The Lord not only manifests Himself to all nations; He also commands that they write His words:

“Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. . . .

“For I command all men . . . that they shall write the words which I speak unto them. . . .

“For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of

the earth and they shall write it” (2 Nephi 29:8, 11–12; see also 1 Nephi 13:38–39).

Furthermore, the Book of Mormon teaches that all of these groups will have the writings of the others (see 2 Nephi 29:13).

We conclude from this that the Lord will eventually cause the inspired teachings He has given to His children in various nations to be brought forth for the benefit of all people. This will include accounts of the visit of the resurrected Lord to what we call the lost tribes of Israel and His revelations to all the seed of Abraham. The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows one way this can occur.

When new writings come forth—and according to prophecy they will—we hope they will not be treated with the rejection some applied to the Book of Mormon because they already had a Bible (see 2 Nephi 29:3–10). As the Lord said through a prophet in that book, “And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man” (2 Nephi 29:9).

Truly, the gospel is for all men everywhere—every nation, every people. All are invited.

We live in the day foretold when righteousness is sent down out of heaven and truth out of the earth “to sweep the earth as with a flood,” and to gather out the elect “from the four quarters of the earth” (Moses 7:62). The Book of Mormon has

come forth to remind us of the covenants of the Lord, to the convincing of all “that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations” (Book of Mormon title page). I add this, my testimony of Him and His mission, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 2:229.
2. See Gary Browning, *Russia and the Restored Gospel* (1997), 200–201, 220–21.
3. Examples from Nigeria, Thailand, Cambodia, and Mongolia as related by mission presidents who have served in those countries.

The choir sang “O Lord Most Holy.”

President Monson

We express our thanks to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning and to all who have participated in any way.

It will now be our privilege to hear from President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, who will be the concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “My Redeemer Lives.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy. The concluding session of this conference will begin at 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gratitude for the Lord’s blessings

My beloved brothers and sisters, I thank you for your prayers in my behalf. I now pray for your sustaining faith.

When a man reaches my age, he pauses now and again to reflect on what has led him to his present status in life.

I feel to indulge upon your time in what might be regarded as a selfish manner. I do so because the life of the President of the Church really belongs to the entire Church. He has very little privacy and no secrets. My talk this morning will be different from any, I think, previously

heard in the general conferences of the Church.

I now face the sunset of my life. We are all totally in the hands of the Lord. As many of you know, I recently underwent major surgery. It is the first time in my 95 years that I have been a patient in a hospital. I do not recommend it to anyone. My doctors say that I still have some residual problems.

I am now approaching my 96th birthday. I take this opportunity to express appreciation and gratitude for the remarkable blessings the Lord has showered upon me.

Choices guided by the Lord

We all face choices in the course of our lives, some of them with a siren song of wealth and prosperity; others appear less promising. Somehow the Lord has watched over and guided my choices, although it was not always evident at the time.

There come to mind the words of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken," which concludes with these lines:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
[*The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery Lathem (1969), 105]

I think of the words of the Lord: "Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:31).

It was 48 years ago at this April conference that I was first sustained as a General Authority. Since that time I have spoken in every general conference of the Church. I have given well over 200 such talks. I have dealt with a great variety of subjects. But running through all has been a dominant thread of testimony of this great latter-day work.

Blessings a result of Church activity

But things have changed and are changing. My beloved companion of 67 years left me two years ago. I miss her more than I can say. She was really a remarkable woman, one with whom I walked side by side in perfect companionship for more than two-thirds of a century. As I look back upon my life, I do so with a measure of wonder and awe. Everything good that has happened, including my marriage, I owe to my activity in the Church.

I had occasion the other evening to review an incomplete list of societies and organizations that have honored me, all because of my activity in the Church. Presidents of the United States, a substantial number of them, have come to the Office of the Presidency of the Church. I have on my office wall a photograph of my presenting a Book of Mormon to President Ronald Reagan. In my bookcase is the Presidential Medal of Freedom given to me by President Bush. I have been to the White House on a number of occasions. I have hosted and mingled with prime ministers and ambassadors of many nations, including Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and Harold Macmillan of the United Kingdom.

I have known and worked with every President of the Church from President Grant down to Howard W. Hunter. I have known and loved all of the General Authorities through these many, many years.

Opportunities to know Church leaders

I am now trying to deal with the many books and artifacts that I have accumulated over the years. In the course of this process I found an old journal with sporadic entries from the years 1951 to 1954. At that time I was a counselor in my stake presidency and had not yet been called as a General Authority.

As I read through this old journal, I recalled with appreciation how, through the kindness of the Lord, I came to know very intimately and well all of the First Presidency and members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Such an opportunity could not now be had by anyone because the Church is much larger.

The journal contains entries such as the following:

“March 11, 1953—President McKay discussed with me the April conference program for mission presidents.

“Thursday, March 19—Joseph Fielding Smith asked that I get one of the Brethren to illustrate handling of Saturday night missionary conferences. . . . I believe that Spencer W. Kimball or Mark E. Petersen should take care of it.

“Thursday, March 26—President McKay told an interesting story. He said, ‘A farmer had a large tract of land. When he grew old it became too much for him. He had a family of boys. He called the boys around him and told them they would have to carry the load. The father rested. But one day he walked out into the field. The boys told him to go back, they did not need his help. He said, “My shadow on this farm is worth more than the labor of all of you.”’ President McKay said that the father in the story represented President Stephen L. Richards, who was ill, but whose contribution and friendship President McKay valued so highly.

“Friday, April 3, 1953—Attended temple meeting with General Authorities and mission presidents from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. More than 30 mission presidents spoke. All want more missionaries. All making good progress.

“Tuesday, April 14—President Richards at office, had a pleasant visit with him. He appears tired and weak. I feel he has been preserved by the Lord for a great purpose.

“Monday, April 20, 1953—Had an interesting visit with Henry D. Moyle of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

“July 15, 1953—Albert E. Bowen, member of the Council of the Twelve, died after more than a year of serious illness. Another of my friends has gone. . . . I got to know him well. He was a wise and steady man. Could never be rushed, and was never in a rush. Extremely deliberate—a man of uncommon wisdom, a man of great and simple faith. The old, wise heads are passing on. They were my friends. In my brief time I have seen many of the great men of the Church come and go. Most of them I have worked with and known intimately. Time has a way of erasing their memory. Another five years and such names as Merrill, Widtsoe, Bowen—all powerful figures—will be forgotten by all but a few. A man must get his satisfaction from his work each day, must recognize that his family may remember him, that he may count with the Lord, but beyond that, small will be his monument among the coming generations.”

And so it goes. I read it only to illustrate the remarkable relationship I had as a young man with members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.

Testimony borne on every continent

During my years I have also walked among the impoverished and poor of the earth and shared with them my love, my concern, and my faith. I have associated with men and women of privilege and stature from many parts of the earth. Through these opportunities I hope I have made at least a small difference.

When I was a young man, a mere boy of 11, I received a patriarchal blessing from a man I had never seen before and never saw thereafter. It is a remarkable document, a prophetic document. It is personal, and I will not read extensively from it. However, it contains this statement: “The nations of the earth shall hear thy voice and be brought to a knowledge of the truth by the wonderful testimony which thou shalt bear.”

When I was released from my mission in England, I took a short trip on the Continent. I had borne my testimony in London; I did so in Berlin and again in Paris and later in Washington, D.C. I said to myself that I had borne my testimony in these great capitals of the world and had fulfilled that part of my blessing.

That proved to be a mere scratching of the surface. Since then I have lifted my voice on every continent, in cities large and small, all up and down from north to south and east to west across this broad world—from Cape Town to Stockholm, from Moscow to Tokyo to Montreal, in every great capital of the world. It is all a miracle.

Challenge to read the Book of Mormon

Last year I asked members of the Church throughout the world to again read the Book of Mormon. Thousands, even hundreds of thousands, responded to that challenge. The Prophet Joseph said in 1841, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461).

Accepting the truth of this statement, I think something remarkable must have happened to the people of this Church. They were observed reading the Book of Mormon while riding the bus, while eating lunch, while in the doctor’s office waiting room, and in scores of other situations. I trust and hope that we have drawn closer to God because of the reading of this book.

200th anniversary of Prophet’s birth

Last December it was my privilege, together with many of you, to honor the Prophet Joseph on the 200th anniversary of his birth. With Elder Ballard, I was at

his birthplace in Vermont while this great Conference Center was filled with Latter-day Saints and the word was carried by satellite transmission across the world in tribute to the beloved Prophet of this great latter-day work.

Appreciation for Church

And so I might go on. I apologize again for speaking in a personal vein. However, I do so only as an expression of appreciation and gratitude for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of this coming to pass because of the place in which the Lord has put me. My heart is overwhelmed with gratitude and love.

To repeat:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

I trust that you will not regard what I have said as an obituary. Rather, I look forward to the opportunity of speaking to you again in October.

Testimony

Now, in conclusion, I hope that all of you will remember that on this Sabbath day you heard me bear my witness that this is God’s holy work. The vision given the Prophet Joseph in the grove of Palmyra was not an imaginary thing. It was real. It occurred in the broad light of day. Both the Father and the Son spoke to the boy. He saw Them standing in the air above him. He heard Their voices. He gave heed to Their instruction.

It was the resurrected Lord who was introduced by His Father, the great God of the universe. For the first time in recorded history, both the Father and the Son appeared together to part the curtains and open this, the last and final dispensation, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

The Book of Mormon is all that it purports to be—a work recorded by prophets who lived anciently and whose words have come forth “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations” (Book of Mormon title page).

The priesthood has been restored under the hands of John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John. All the keys and authority pertaining to eternal life are exercised in this Church.

Joseph Smith was and is a prophet, the great Prophet of this dispensation. This Church, which carries the name of the Redeemer, is true.

I leave you my testimony, my witness, and my love for each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “My Redeemer Lives.” Elder Marlin K. Jensen offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 176th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 2, 2006. President James E. Faust conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 176th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wil-

berg, with Linda Margetts and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing “Sing Praise to Him.” The invocation will then be offered by Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy.

Following the invocation, the choir will sing “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.” Elders M. Russell Ballard and Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then speak to us, and they will be followed by Elder David R. Stone of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will then sing “How Firm a Foundation.” At the conclusion of the singing, Elders Robert S. Wood and H. Bruce Stucki of the Seventy will address us. Following their remarks, we will be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir sang “Sing Praise to Him.” Elder Lance B. Wickman offered the invocation.

The choir sang “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.”

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Appreciation for the Restoration

My brothers and sisters, not many weeks ago I had both of my knees surgically replaced. So when I say that I am grateful to be able to stand before you today, it is no idle statement. During this recuperative period I have been reminded of how blessed we are to know of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am overwhelmed when I think about the pain and the suffering He went through for us in Gethsemane and on the cross. How He endured it I cannot comprehend. But I thank Him, and I love Him more profoundly than words can express.

I also thank President Hinckley for the privilege of being with him at the birthplace of the Prophet Joseph. Because of Joseph Smith, we have been given much. Were it not for the Restoration we would not know the true nature of God, our Heavenly Father, or our own divine nature as His children. We would not understand the eternal nature of our existence or know that the family can be together forever.

We would not be aware that God continues to speak to His prophets in our day, beginning with the marvelous First Vision wherein the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph. We would not have the comforting assurance that we are led by a prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley.

Without the Restoration we would likely be under the assumption that the entirety of God's word is found in the Bible. As precious and wonderful as that book of scripture is, we would not know of the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures that teach eternal truths which help us draw nearer to our Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Without the Restoration we would not have the blessings of priesthood ordi-

nances that are valid in time and eternity. We would not know the conditions of repentance, nor would we understand the reality of the Resurrection. We would not have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Motivation to share the gospel

When we truly understand how great a blessing the gospel of Jesus Christ is in our lives, when we accept and embrace these eternal truths and allow them to sink deep into our hearts and souls, we experience a "mighty change" (Alma 5:14) in our hearts. We are filled with love and gratitude. As the prophet Alma wrote, we feel "to sing the song of redeeming love" (Alma 5:26) to all who will hear it.

"O that I were an angel," Alma said, "and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

"Yea, I would declare unto every soul . . . the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth" (Alma 29:1–2).

So it should be with us, my brothers and sisters. Our love for the Lord and appreciation for the Restoration of the gospel are all the motivation we need to share what gives us much joy and happiness. It is the most natural thing in the world for us to do, and yet far too many of us are hesitant to share our testimonies with others.

Missionaries need more people to teach

All around the world, missionaries are responding to this testimony-driven joy in sharing the gospel. Many of them are entering the MTC with their own marked and well-studied copies of the missionary

guide *Preach My Gospel*. I am pleased to report that with the use of *Preach My Gospel*, they are increasingly able to teach in their own words by the power of the Spirit and are better able to adjust their lessons to the needs of those whom they are teaching. As a result they are having meaningful impact on many lives.

But quite frankly, what they need now is more people to teach. Experience has shown that the best teaching situations develop when our members participate in the finding and teaching process. This is nothing new—you've heard it before. Some of you may even feel guilty that you are not giving much help to the missionaries.

Today I invite you to relax and set aside your concerns and focus instead on your love for the Lord, your testimony of His eternal reality, and your gratitude for all He has done for you. If you are truly motivated by love and testimony and gratitude, you will quite naturally do all that you can to assist the Lord in “[bringing] to pass the immortality and eternal life” (Moses 1:39) of our Father's children. In fact, it would be impossible to keep you from doing it.

Creating a gospel-sharing home

The Savior Himself showed us the way when He invited His disciples to “come and see . . . where he dwelt, and [they] abode with him that day” (John 1:39). Why do you suppose He did that? The scriptural record does not explain His reasoning, but I am confident that it had nothing to do with comfort or convenience. As always, He was teaching. And what better way to teach His followers than to invite them to visit with Him so they could see and experience His magnificent message firsthand?

Similarly, our homes can be gospel-sharing homes as people we know and love come into our homes and experience the gospel firsthand in both word and action. We can share the gospel without holding a

formal discussion. Our families can be our lesson, and the spirit that emanates from our homes can be our message.

Having a gospel-sharing home will not only be a blessing for those we bring into our homes but for those who live within it. As we live in a gospel-sharing home, our testimonies become stronger and our understanding of the gospel improves. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that we can be forgiven of our sins when we help someone else repent (see D&C 62:3). We find joy in helping others come unto Christ and feel the redemptive power of His love (see D&C 18:14–16). Our families are blessed as the testimonies and faith of both parents and children increase.

In gospel-sharing homes we pray for guidance for ourselves, and we pray for the physical and spiritual well-being of others. We pray for the people the missionaries are teaching, for our acquaintances, and for those not of our faith. In the gospel-sharing homes of Alma's time, the people would “join in fasting and mighty prayer in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those who knew not God” (Alma 6:6).

Creating a gospel-sharing home is the easiest and most effective way that we can share the gospel with others. And we're not just talking about traditional homes with families consisting of two parents living with their children. College students can create a gospel-sharing home when they adorn the walls of their apartments with pictures that reflect spiritual pursuits instead of the things of the world. Older couples and single members exemplify a gospel-sharing home when they welcome new neighbors and invite them to attend church and visit them in their homes.

A gospel-sharing home is one in which neighborhood children love to play, making it natural to invite them and their family to attend church, a family home evening, or some other activity. Teenagers visiting a gospel-sharing home feel comfortable

asking questions or participating with the family in prayer.

Gospel-sharing homes are very ordinary. They may not always be spotlessly clean nor the children perfectly behaved. But they are a place in which family members clearly love each other, and the Spirit of the Lord is felt by those who visit.

What a gospel-sharing home is not

As we talk about what a gospel-sharing home is, perhaps it would also be helpful to identify some things that a gospel-sharing home is not.

A gospel-sharing home is not a program. It is a way of life. Creating a gospel-sharing home means inviting our friends and neighbors into the ongoing flow of family and Church activities. As we invite our friends to join us for these activities, they will also feel the Spirit.

Creating a gospel-sharing home does not mean that we are going to have to dedicate large amounts of time to meeting and cultivating friends with whom to share the gospel. These friends will come naturally into our lives, and if we are open about our membership in the Church from the very beginning, we can easily bring gospel discussions into the relationship with very little risk of being misunderstood. Friends and acquaintances will accept that this is part of who we are, and they will feel free to ask questions.

A gospel-sharing home is not defined by whether or not people join the Church as a result of our contact with them. Our opportunity and responsibility are to care, to share, to testify, to invite, and then to allow individuals to decide for themselves. We are blessed when we have invited them to consider the Restoration, regardless of the outcome. At the very least, we have a rewarding relationship with someone from another faith, and we can continue to enjoy their friendship.

In a gospel-sharing home we do not just pray for the health, safety, and success

of our missionaries throughout the world. We also pray for our own missionary experiences and opportunities and to be prepared to act on those impressions as they come our way. And I promise you, they *will* come.

Ways to share the gospel

More than 20 years ago I suggested that the key to successful member missionary work is the exercise of faith. One way to show your faith in the Lord and His promises is to prayerfully set a date to have someone prepared to meet with the missionaries. I have received hundreds of letters from members who have exercised their faith in this simple way. Even though families had no one in mind with whom they could share the gospel, they set a date, prayed, and then talked to many more people. The Lord is the Good Shepherd, and He knows His sheep who have been prepared to hear His voice. He will guide us as we seek His divine help in sharing His gospel.

A sister in France was asked about the secret of her success. She said, "I simply share my joy. I treat everyone as if they were already a member of the Church. If I'm standing by someone in line and strike up a conversation, I share with them how much I enjoyed my Church meetings on Sunday. When co-workers ask, 'What did you do this weekend?' I do not skip from Saturday night to Monday morning. I share with them that I went to church, what was said, and my experiences with the Saints. I talk about how I live, think, and feel."

In a gospel-sharing home, our personal missionary effort is a topic of family councils and discussions. One faithful family counseled together on the need for each family member to be an example. Later, the son's high school coach, who was not a member, sent a donation to the Church. Why? Because this young man had impressed him with his courage in

speaking up and telling his teammates to clean up their language. There are thousands of experiences that could be shared where people have joined the Church because of the spirit and attitude they observe in the lives of those who come from gospel-sharing homes.

Church literature or DVDs can introduce new friends to the Church. Invitations to hear a family member speak in sacrament meeting or to attend the baptismal service of a family member or to tour a meetinghouse have also been appreciated by those who are not members. From every indicator we have, there is nothing more effective than that any of us can do for our friends than to say “come and see” by joining with us in sacrament meeting. Far too many do not know they are welcome to worship with us.

Assisting leaders and missionaries

Of course, all of us support the ward leaders and assist in making the ward mission plan effective. Whatever our Church

calling may be, we help priesthood and auxiliary leaders assist missionaries, welcome and involve visitors, and fellowship new members. You can ask the missionaries to show you their daily planners so you can see how you can best help them accomplish their goals. As we work together, the spirit of our gospel-sharing homes will overflow in our chapels, our classrooms, and our cultural halls.

I bear testimony that if we will just do some of these simple things, the Lord will lead us to find tens of thousands of Heavenly Father’s children who are ready to be taught the gospel. Our love for the Lord, our appreciation for His atoning sacrifice, and His mission to have all come unto Him should provide all the motivation we need to be successful in sharing the gospel.

May the Lord bless you, my brothers and sisters, with greater faith and trust in Him as you reach out now to introduce the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of the world, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Recent developments in missionary work

It would be difficult to imagine anything more exciting to do as a young man, woman, or couple in the world today than to be a full-time missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The message of the restored gospel we share is absolutely vital. It is from God, our Eternal Father, for every one of His children on earth and is centered in His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. When that message is understood and lived, it can replace turmoil with peace, sorrow with happiness, and provide solutions to life’s persistent challenges.

We now have very clear direction for success in missionary service. It is provided by the guide *Preach My Gospel* and the resources developed to accompany it. The

highly effective new missionary lessons are based upon teaching by the Spirit rather than rote memorization. They have greatly improved sharing the gospel worldwide. Each mission president has been carefully taught how to implement the new materials. The result is a corps of highly capable, devoted, enthusiastic mission presidents with the capacity to inspire and powerfully motivate their missionaries.

The worldwide study and application of the concepts in *Preach My Gospel* by every missionary has strengthened our capacity to proclaim the message of the Restoration and to teach the plan of salvation and other gospel principles. Raising the bar of worthiness has had far-reaching consequences. There is more devoted ser-

vice in the field, stronger companion relationships, much more effective teaching, and improved retention of converts.

The overall guidance given to supervise missionary work is unequaled. It supports all missionary effort worldwide through Area Presidencies, the seven Presidents of Seventy, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the personal, concentrated interest of the First Presidency.

Exciting fields of labor the world over allow the inspiration of the Lord to call young men and women and devoted couples to challenging assignments conditioned to each personal need and capacity. I rejoice in the opportunity to participate in this captivating effort that potently blesses so many around the globe.

Preparing for full-time missionary service

Elder M. Russell Ballard has spoken about creating a gospel-sharing home. I will discuss how to prepare to be a full-time missionary as an elder, a sister, or a couple.

Teachings in the home

The process begins in the home long before missionary age when parents instill in the minds and hearts of every young boy the concept of “when I go on a mission,” not “if I go on a mission.” Children are best taught gospel truths in the home where instruction can be adapted to the age and capacity of each child. In the home the whole armor of truth is tailor fit to the individual characteristics of each child. Parental teaching qualifies children for life and prepares worthy young men for the joy of missionary service. In the home a young girl can understand that her primary role is to be a wife and mother. Yet as that preparation unfolds there may be an opportunity to serve a full-time mission, provided recent counsel of the First Presidency is followed:

“Worthy single women ages twenty-one and older . . . may be recommended to serve full-time missions. . . . These sisters can make a valuable contribution . . . , but they should not be pressured to serve. Bishops should not recommend them for missionary service if it will interfere with imminent marriage prospects.”¹

Use of Preach My Gospel

Many parents are using parts of the guide *Preach My Gospel* to stress the concepts that will bear fruit as their children’s testimonies mature while they are nurtured in the home. As a young boy you can learn how to fulfill your duty as a future priesthood bearer. You will be helped to understand and apply important teachings of the Lord. You will be strengthened to live worthily to be able to receive sacred temple ordinances and to serve a full-time mission. Such experiences will develop a foundation for the later blessing of your being a strong husband and father.

Portions of *Preach My Gospel* will prepare you as a young woman to understand and apply doctrine for your role as wife and mother. Should you choose to serve a full-time mission, you will have a foundation for it. The seminary programs will help you as a young man or woman to lay a foundation for happiness and success in life. There is a special course in the institute program and at the three Brigham Young Universities that can prepare you for missionary service. It is founded in the principles contained in *Preach My Gospel* and goes hand-in-hand with that powerful resource. It will give you a head start for when you are called to serve.

The power and effectiveness of the guide *Preach My Gospel* for missionaries, leaders, members, and parents is manifest in the fact that just under one million copies have been distributed thus far. Are you benefiting from your own personal copy?

Motivating interviews by leaders

As a bishop or branch president, through motivating interviews you can bless the life of every young man in your ward as well as appropriate couples by encouraging them to prepare for full-time missions. Not only will you bless those potential missionaries but you may answer the prayers of parents who have a maturing son not yet committed to a mission despite their efforts to encourage that desire.

For example, from childhood through maturing years, our daughter Mary Lee heard her parents speak of our treasured missionary experiences. We had explained how challenging missionary opportunities had enriched our lives and laid the foundation for all that we treasure in life. Yet we taught that it was her decision whether she would serve or not.

Through her growing years, it was clear that she intended to be a missionary. However, as missionary age approached, her exciting experiences in the university began to present attractive alternatives. Once when she mentioned wrestling with that uncertainty, she was counseled to talk to her bishop. An appointment was arranged. As she sat down before a choice bishop, she asked, "What do you think of my serving a full-time mission?" The bishop jumped from his chair, clapped his hands on the desk, and said, "That is the greatest thing I could imagine for you." That comment tipped the scales.

Mary Lee served a most effective mission in Spain that unveiled hidden capacities, matured her spiritual development, and caused to flower capabilities that have blessed her as a wife and mother. The bishop that had such a profound influence in my daughter's life is J. Willard Marriott Jr., currently an Area Seventy. But we remember him most for what he did for our daughter Mary Lee. Now in her own family, with the strong examples of a returned missionary father and mother, a son and a

daughter have fulfilled exemplary missions. The remaining son will clearly be a missionary, and the last daughter will in time make the proper choice. Another grandchild, following in the footsteps of his father, was recently called to serve in the Mexico Cuernavaca Mission.

Use of resources by leaders

Bishops and branch presidents, you can have that powerful impact in the lives of the missionaries you encourage and prepare as well as in lives of their posterity. Use your Aaronic Priesthood quorum leaders and the advisers, as well as the high priests, elders, and women leaders, to help you prepare to call as many worthy missionaries as you can. From the use of the new missionary resources, many more missionaries you recommend arrive in the field better prepared and highly motivated to serve. While most potential candidates can with little effort be ready, a few need substantial adjustments in their life to qualify. With the support of parents, help them meet the standards.

Pray about which couples can be encouraged to submit papers for a call to full-time missionary service. There is an urgent need for them.

I am constantly amazed at how the Holy Ghost matches the characteristics and needs of each missionary and couple to the widely varying circumstances of missionary service throughout the world. I have observed how some of the strongest, most capable elders and sisters are called to the United States and Canada to keep the roots of the Church strong there. I have seen how missionaries who return from unusual assignments, such as adapting to the native culture of a Pacific Island, Mongolia, or the highlands of Guatemala or otherwise serving with minimal personal contact with the mission president, develop previously unknown personal capacities extremely well.

Elder Scott's full-time mission experience

Now may I speak from my heart of what an honorable full-time mission has meant to me personally. I grew up in a home with very good parents, but my father was not a member and my mother was less active. After my mission, that changed. They became strong members and served devotedly in the temple—he a sealer, she an ordinance worker. But as a young man, like many of you today, I had no way to judge personally the importance of a mission. I fell in love with an exceptional young woman. At a critical point in our courtship, she made it very clear that she would only be married in the temple to a returned missionary. Duly motivated, I served a mission in Uruguay.

It was not easy. The Lord gave me many challenges that became stepping-stones to personal growth. There I gained my testimony that God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, did in fact visit Joseph Smith to begin a restoration of truth, priesthood authority, and the true Church on earth. I gained a witness that Joseph Smith is a singular prophet. I learned essential doctrines. I discovered what it meant to be led by the Spirit. Many a night I got up as my companion slept to pour my heart out to the Lord for guidance and direction. I pled for the ability to express effectively in Spanish my testimony and the truth I was learning to a people I had come to love. Those prayers were abundantly answered. At the same time, my future eternal companion, Jeanene, was being molded to become an exceptional wife and mother by her own mission.

Most important, all that I now hold dear in life began to mature in the mission field. Had I not been encouraged to be a missionary, I would not have the eternal companion or precious family I dearly love. I am confident that I would not have had the exceptional professional opportunities that stretched my every capacity.

I am certain that I would not have received the sacred callings with opportunities to serve for which I will be eternally grateful. My life has been richly blessed beyond measure because I served a mission.

Now can you understand why I am so anxious to motivate every one of you young men to be a worthy missionary? Can you comprehend why I encourage you as a mature couple to plan, if health permits, to serve the Lord as missionaries? Can you see why I suggest that some of you young women, where there is a desire and it will not affect an impending marriage, seriously consider serving the Lord as a missionary? Our home has been greatly blessed by a wife and mother who chose to serve a full-time mission during my period of service.

Young men, seek guidance

If you are a young man wondering whether you ought to fulfill a full-time mission, don't approach that vital decision with your own wisdom alone. Seek the counsel of your parents, your bishop, or stake president. In your prayers ask to have the will of the Lord made known to you. I know that a mission will provide extraordinary blessings for you now and throughout your life. I urge you not to pray to know whether you should go; rather, ask the Lord to guide you in whatever may be necessary to become a worthy, empowered full-time missionary. You will never regret serving a mission, but you most probably will regret not serving if that is your choice.

I know that Jesus is the Christ, that His Church and the fulness of His gospel have been restored to earth through a singularly important prophet, Joseph Smith. I testify that devoted full-time missionary service is a source of great happiness and rich blessings, not only for those who hear the message but also for those who, under

the guidance of the Spirit, deliver it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTE

1. Communication from the First Presidency, unpublished.

Elder David R. Stone

Zion in the midst of Babylon

Last summer, my wife and I had the opportunity to travel to San Diego, California, and there see Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at the Old Globe Theatre. We saw two performances, because our daughter Carolyn was playing the part of one of the three witches in that play. Of course, we were delighted to see her in the play and even more delighted when, at a dramatic moment, she said those famous lines: "By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes" (act 4, scene 1, lines 40–41).

When I heard that, I thought how useful it would be to have an early-warning system which would tell us about the approach of evil and allow us to be prepared for it. Evil is coming toward us, whether or not we have an early-warning system.

On a later occasion, my wife and I were driving cross-country one night and were approaching a great city. As we came over the hills and saw the bright lights on the horizon, I nudged my wife awake and said, "Behold the city of Babylon!"

Of course, there is no particular city today which personifies Babylon. Babylon was, in the time of ancient Israel, a city which had become sensual, decadent, and corrupt. The principal building in the city was a temple to a false god, which we often refer to as Bel or Baal.

However, that sensuality, corruption, and decadence, and the worshipping of false gods are to be seen in many cities, great and small, scattered across the globe. As the Lord has said: "They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and af-

ter the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world" (D&C 1:16).

Too many of the people of the world have come to resemble the Babylon of old by walking in their own ways and following a god "whose image is in the likeness of the world."

One of the greatest challenges we will face is to be able to live in that world but somehow not be of that world. We have to create Zion in the midst of Babylon.

"Zion in the midst of Babylon." What a luminous and incandescent phrase, as a light shining in the midst of spiritual darkness. What a concept to hold close to our hearts as we see Babylon becoming more widespread. We see Babylon in our cities; we see Babylon in our communities; we see Babylon everywhere.

The culture of our place and time

And with the encroachment of Babylon, we have to create Zion in the midst of it. We should not allow ourselves to be engulfed by the culture which surrounds us. We seldom realize the extent to which we are a product of the culture of our place and time.

During the days of ancient Israel, the people of the Lord were an island of the one true God, surrounded by an ocean of idolatry. The waves of that ocean crashed incessantly upon the shores of Israel. Despite the commandment to make no graven image and bow down before it, Israel seemingly could not help itself, influenced by the culture of the place and time. Over and over again—despite the prohibition of the Lord, despite what prophet and priest

had said—Israel went seeking after strange gods and bowed down before them.

How could Israel have forgotten the Lord, who brought them out of Egypt? They were constantly pressured by what was popular in the ambience in which they lived.

What an insidious thing is this culture amidst which we live. It permeates our environment, and we think we are being reasonable and logical when, all too often, we have been molded by the ethos, what the Germans call the *zeitgeist*, or the culture of our place and time.

Because my wife and I have had the opportunity to live in 10 different countries, we have seen the effect of the ethos on behavior. Customs which are perfectly acceptable in one culture are viewed as unacceptable in another; language which is polite in some places is viewed as abhorrent in others. People in every culture move within a cocoon of self-satisfied self-deception, fully convinced that the way they see things is the way things really are.

Our culture tends to determine what foods we like, how we dress, what constitutes polite behavior, what sports we should follow, what our taste in music should be, the importance of education, and our attitudes toward honesty. It also influences men as to the importance of recreation or religion, influences women about the priority of career or childbearing, and has a powerful effect on how we approach procreation and moral issues. All too often, we are like puppets on a string, as our culture determines what is “cool.”

The culture of the people of God

There is, of course, a *zeitgeist* to which we should pay attention, and that is the ethos of the Lord, the culture of the people of God. As Peter states it, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who

hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

It is the ethos of those who keep the Lord’s commandments, walk in His ways, and “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 84:44). If that makes us peculiar, so be it.

My involvement with the building of the Manhattan Temple gave me the opportunity to be in the temple quite often prior to the dedication. It was wonderful to sit in the celestial room and be there in perfect silence, without a single sound to be heard coming from the busy New York streets outside. How was it possible that the temple could be so reverently silent when the hustle and bustle of the metropolis was just a few yards away?

The answer was in the construction of the temple. The temple was built within the walls of an existing building, and the inner walls of the temple were connected to the outer walls at only a very few junction points. That is how the temple (Zion) limited the effects of Babylon, or the world outside.

There may be a lesson here for us. We can create the real Zion among us by limiting the extent to which Babylon will influence our lives.

Four young men resist pressure

When, about 600 years B.C., Nebuchadnezzar came from Babylon and conquered Judah, he carried away the people of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar selected some of the young men for special education and training.

Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were to be the favored ones among the young people brought to Babylon. The king’s servant instructed them that they were to eat of the king’s meat and drink of the king’s wine.

Let us clearly understand the pressures that the four young men were under. They had been carried away as captives

by a conquering power and were in the household of a king who held the power of life or death over them. And yet Daniel and his brothers refused to do that which they believed to be wrong, however much the Babylonian culture believed it to be right. And for that fidelity and courage, the Lord blessed them and “gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom” (Daniel 1:17).

“Love not the world”

Seduced by our culture, we often hardly recognize our idolatry, as our strings are pulled by that which is popular in the Babylonian world. Indeed, as the poet Wordsworth said, “The world is too much with us” (“The World Is Too Much with Us; Late and Soon,” in *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* [1924], 353).

In his first epistle, John writes:

“I have written unto you . . . because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:14–15).

We do not need to adopt the standards, the mores, and the morals of Babylon. We can create Zion in the midst of Babylon. We can have our own standards for music and literature and dance and film and language. We can have our own standards for dress and deportment, for politeness and respect. We can live in accordance with the Lord’s moral laws. We can limit how much of Babylon we allow into our homes by the media of communication.

The need for courage

We can live as a Zion people, if we wish to. Will it be hard? Of course it will, for the waves of Babylonian culture crash incessantly against our shores. Will it take courage? Of course it will.

We have always been entranced by tales of courage of those who faced fearsome odds and overcame. Courage is the basis and foundation for all of our other virtues; the lack of courage diminishes every other virtue that we have. If we are to have Zion in the midst of Babylon, we will need courage.

Have you ever imagined that, when it came to the test, you would perform some act of bravery? I know I did, as a boy. I imagined that someone was in peril and that, at the risk of my own life, I saved him. Or in some dangerous confrontation with a fearsome opponent, I had the courage to overcome. Such are our youthful imaginations!

Almost 70 years of life have taught me that those heroic opportunities are few and far between, if they come at all.

But the opportunities to stand for that which is right—when the pressures are subtle and when even our friends are encouraging us to give in to the idolatry of the times—those come along far more frequently. No photographer is there to record the heroism; no journalist will splash it across the newspaper’s front page. Just in the quiet contemplation of our conscience, we will know that we faced the test of courage: Zion or Babylon?

Building our own Zion

Make no mistake about it: much of Babylon, if not most of it, is evil. And we will not have the pricking of our thumbs to warn us. But wave after wave is coming, crashing against our shores. Will it be Zion, or will it be Babylon?

If Babylon is the city of the world, Zion is the city of God. The Lord has said of Zion: “Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom” (D&C 105:5) and, “For this is Zion—the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21).

Wherever we are, whatever city we may live in, we can build our own Zion by the principles of the celestial kingdom and

ever seek to become the pure in heart. Zion is the beautiful, and the Lord holds it in His own hands. Our homes can be places which are a refuge and protection, as Zion is.

We do not need to become as puppets in the hands of the culture of the place and time. We can be courageous and can walk in the Lord's paths and follow His footsteps. And if we do, we will be called Zion, and we will be the people of the Lord.

I pray that we will be strengthened to resist the onslaught of Babylon and that we can create Zion in our homes and our

communities—indeed, that we may have “Zion in the midst of Babylon.”

We seek Zion because it is the habitation of our Lord, who is Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. In Zion and from Zion, His luminous and incandescent light will shine forth, and He will rule forever. I bear witness that He lives and loves us and will watch over us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir and congregation sang
“How Firm a Foundation.”

Elder Robert S. Wood

Hearts stirred up to anger

I have a friend who is a member of a political panel that is seen each week on national television. Explaining her role, she said, “We are encouraged to speak before thinking!” We appear to be living in an era in which many are speaking without thinking, encouraging emotional reactions rather than thoughtful responses. Whether it be on the national or international stage, in personal relations or in politics, at home or in the public forum, voices grow ever more strident, and giving and taking offense appear to be chosen rather than inadvertent.

The Lord has warned that from the beginning and throughout history, Satan would stir up people's hearts to anger.¹ In the Book of Mormon, Laman set a pattern of so murmuring as to stir anger, to stoke rage, and to incite murder.² Time and again in the Book of Mormon, we find deluded and wicked men inciting rage and provoking conflict. In the days of Captain Moroni, the apostate Amalickiah inspired “the hearts of the Lamanites against the people of Nephi.”³ Amulon and the wicked priests of Noah; Nehor; Korihor; and Zoram the apostate (the dishonor roll goes

on throughout the Book of Mormon) were agitators who inspired distrust, fueled controversy, and deepened hatreds.

In speaking to Enoch, the Lord indicated that both the time of His birth and the time preceding His Second Coming would be “days of wickedness and vengeance.”⁴ And the Lord has said that in the last days, wrath shall be poured out upon the earth without mixture.⁵ *Wrath* is defined both as the righteous indignation of God and as the very human instances of impetuous ardor and deep or violent anger. The former arises from the concern of a loving Father whose children are often “without affection, and they hate their own blood,”⁶ whereas the latter wrath arises from a people “without order and without mercy, . . . strong in their perversion.”⁷ I fear the earth is experiencing both wraths, and I suspect the divine wrath is very much provoked by those who are stirring up the hearts of men to wickedness, slander, and violent hatreds.

Patterns of slander and stereotyping

The first casualties of human wrath are truth and understanding. James counseled that we be “swift to hear, slow to

“speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”⁸ As Enoch observed, God’s throne is one of peace, justice, and truth.⁹ Whether they be false friends or unrighteous teachers, artists or entertainers, commentators or letter writers to local newspapers, seekers of power or wealth, beware of those who stir us up to such anger that calm reflection and charitable feelings are suppressed.

Alma at the waters of Mormon invited those who would enter into a covenant relationship with God to stand as witnesses of God and to bear one another’s burdens.¹⁰ As those who have indeed entered into a sacred covenant, we must remain true to the way, the truth, and the life, who is Jesus Christ.

Have we who have taken upon us the name of Christ slipped unknowingly into patterns of slander, evil speaking, and bitter stereotyping? Have personal or partisan or business or religious differences been translated into a kind of demonizing of those of different views? Do we pause to understand the seemingly different positions of others and seek, where possible, common ground?

I recall that as a graduate student I wrote a critique of an important political philosopher. It was clear that I disagreed with him. My professor told me that my paper was good, but not good enough. Before you launch into your criticism, she said, you must first present the strongest case for the position you are opposing, one that the philosopher himself could accept. I redid the paper. I still had important differences with the philosopher, but I understood him better, and I saw the strengths and virtues, as well as limitations, of his belief. I learned a lesson that I’ve applied across the spectrum of my life.

General Andrew Jackson, as he walked along the line at the Battle of New Orleans, said to his men, “Gentlemen, elevate your guns a little lower!” I think many

of us need to elevate our “guns” a little lower. On the other hand, we need to raise the level of private and public discourse. We should avoid caricaturing the positions of others, constructing “straw men,” if you will, and casting unwarranted aspersions on their motivations and character. We need, as the Lord counseled, to uphold honest, wise, and good men and women wherever they are found and to recognize that there are “among all sects, parties, and denominations” those who are “kept from the truth [of the gospel] because they know not where to find it.”¹¹ Would we hide that light because we have entered into the culture of slander, of stereotyping, of giving and seeking offense?

Mockery and cynicism

It is far too easy sometimes to fall into a spirit of mockery and cynicism in dealing with those of contrary views. We demoralize or demean so as to bring others or their ideas in contempt. It is a primary tool of those who occupy the large and spacious building that Father Lehi saw in vision.¹² Jude, the brother of Christ, warned that “there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”¹³

Closely related to mockery is a spirit of cynicism. Cynics are disposed to find and to catch at fault. Implicitly or explicitly, they display a sneering disbelief in sincerity and rectitude. Isaiah spoke of those who “watch for iniquity” and “make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.”¹⁴ In this regard, the Lord has counseled in latter days that we “cease to find fault one with another” and “above all things, clothe [ourselves] with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.”¹⁵

Instruments of the Lord's peace

President George Albert Smith observed, "There is nothing in the world more deleterious or harmful to the human family than hatred, prejudice, suspicion, and the attitude that some people have toward their fellows, of unkindness."¹⁶ In matters of politics, he warned, "Whenever your politics cause you to speak unkindly of your brethren, know this, that you are upon dangerous ground."¹⁷ Speaking of the great mission of the latter-day kingdom, he counseled: "This is not a militant church to which we belong. This is a church that holds out peace to the world. It is not our duty to go into the world and find fault with others, neither to criticize men because they do not understand. But it is our privilege, in kindness and love, to go among them and divide with them the truth that the Lord has revealed in this latter day."¹⁸

The Lord has constituted us as a people for a special mission. As He told Enoch in ancient times, the day in which we live would be one of darkness, but it would also be a time when righteousness would come down from heaven, and truth would be sent forth out of the earth to bear, once more, testimony of Christ and His atoning mission. As with a flood, that message would sweep the world, and the Lord's elect would be gathered out from the four quarters of the earth.¹⁹ Wherever we live in the world, we have been molded as a people to be the instruments of the Lord's peace. In the words of Peter, we have been claimed by God for His own, to proclaim the triumph of Him "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God."²⁰ We cannot afford to be caught up in a world prone to give and to take offense. Rather, as the Lord revealed to both Paul and Mormon, we must neither envy nor be puffed up in pride. We are not easily provoked, nor do we behave unseemly.

We rejoice not in iniquity but in the truth. Surely this is the pure love of Christ, which we represent.²¹

In a world beset by wrath, the prophet of our day, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has counseled: "Now, there is much that we can and must do in these perilous times. We can give our opinions on the merits of the situation as we see it, but never let us become a party to words or works of evil concerning our brothers and sisters in various nations on one side or the other. Political differences never justify hatred or ill will. I hope that the Lord's people may be at peace one with another during times of trouble, regardless of what loyalties they may have to different governments or parties."²²

Let us not fall into darkness

As true witnesses of Christ in the latter days, let us not fall into the darkness so that, in the words of Peter, we "cannot see afar off," but let us be fruitful in the testimony of Christ and His restored gospel, in thought, in speech, in deed.²³ God lives. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Joseph Smith, the great prophet of the Restoration, was the instrument by which we have been constituted as a people, led even today by a prophet of God, President Gordon B. Hinckley. Let us daily renew in our hearts the pure love of Christ and overcome with our Master the darkness of the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 28:20; Doctrine and Covenants 10:24.
2. See 1 Nephi 16:37–38.
3. Alma 48:1.
4. Moses 7:46, 60.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:6.
6. Moses 7:33.
7. Moroni 9:18–19.
8. James 1:19–20.
9. See Moses 7:31.
10. See Mosiah 18:8–10.

11. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12; see also 98:10.
12. See 1 Nephi 8:26–33; 11:36.
13. Jude 1:18–19.
14. Isaiah 29:20–21.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 88:124–25.
16. *Sayings of a Saint*, sel. Alice K. Chase (1952), 30.
17. In Conference Report, Apr. 1914, 12.
18. In Conference Report, Apr. 1935, 44.
19. See Moses 7:62.
20. 1 Peter 2:9–10.
21. See 1 Corinthians 13:4–6; Moroni 7:45–47.
22. In Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 84; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 80.
23. See 2 Peter 1:8–9.

Elder H. Bruce Stucki

Help in finding a lost arrow

It was the day after Christmas, 1946, in Santa Clara, Utah. As a young nine-year-old boy, I asked my mother if I could take my Christmas gift, a new bow and arrow set, and go up on the hill behind our home to hunt for rabbits. It was late in the afternoon, and Mother was reluctant, but with my coaxing she agreed to let me go, but only if I was back home before dark.

As I reached the top of the hill, I put an arrow on the bow and started walking quietly through the sage and chaparral bushes, hoping to see a rabbit feeding at the base of the brush where the tender grass was still green.

I was startled by a large jackrabbit that jumped out from a sage bush right in front of me. I pulled back on the bow, taking a quick aim, and let the arrow fly at the fleeing, darting rabbit. The arrow missed, and the rabbit disappeared through the brush ahead.

I went to where I thought the arrow had hit the ground to retrieve it. Only three arrows came with the bow, and I didn't want to lose this one. I looked where the arrow was supposed to be, but it wasn't there. I looked all around the area where I was sure it landed, but I couldn't find it.

The sun was setting in the west; I knew that it would be dark in about 30 minutes, and I didn't want to be late getting home. I searched again the area where the arrow should have been, look-

ing carefully under every bush, but it was not to be found.

Time was running out, and I needed to start for home to get there before dark. I decided to pray and ask Heavenly Father to help me find the arrow. I dropped to my knees, closed my eyes, and prayed to my Father in Heaven. I told Him I didn't want to lose my new arrow, and I asked Him to show me where to find it.

While still on my knees, I opened my eyes, and there in the sagebrush immediately in front of me, at eye level, I saw the colored feathers of the arrow partly hidden by the branches. I grabbed the arrow and began to run for home, arriving there just before dark.

I will never forget that special experience. Our Heavenly Father had answered my prayer. That was the first time I had prayed for Him to help me, and He did! That evening I learned to have faith and trust in my Heavenly Father.

The stepping-stone of prayer

When we need help, even as a naive little boy with an important concern, our Heavenly Father hears our prayer, and with love He gives us the guidance we seek.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, said to us, "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers."¹

From the scriptures, James instructed us:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."²

President James E. Faust taught us, "A fervent, sincere prayer is a two-way communication which will do much to bring His Spirit flowing like healing water to help with the trials, hardships, aches, and pains we all face."³

Prayer is one of the stepping-stones on the path that leads us to eternal life with our Father in Heaven.

The stepping-stone of faith

Faith is another stepping-stone that is critical to our eternal salvation.

The Savior also said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you."⁴

Young doctor performs a brain operation

Thirty years ago a true story unfolded in the most remote part of New Zealand. The windswept Chatham Islands are located in the South Pacific Ocean about 500 miles east of Christchurch. A hardy and resourceful 650 people lived there, isolated in the lonely, harsh environment of those days; and a young, inexperienced, and newly qualified doctor was responsible for their medical care.

An eight-year-old boy, Shane, had sustained a serious head injury 40 miles away on the far side of the island. He was being rushed in across the swamps and along the beaches on the backseat of an old, rusty car to the four-bed cottage hospital. He was unconscious.

The young doctor was unprepared to handle such a case, with little experience and having only the most basic of surgical instruments. Shane was in a critical condition. There was obvious bleeding inside

his fractured skull—and blood clotting could fatally compress his brain. The doctor had never even seen a brain operation, but he knew he had to perform the delicate surgery immediately—or watch a little boy die.

There were blood donors to be called in, blood to be cross matched, an anesthetic to be prepared. The antique X-ray machine had broken down, so no helpful X-rays could be taken.

There was the first of many phone calls to Wellington, where a neurosurgeon tried to imagine the scene and guide the nervous young doctor through the process of a very delicate surgical procedure.

Shane's mother prayed. The doctor prayed; the nurses prayed; the doctor's wife prayed.

Responsibilities had to be delegated in this busy scene. The policeman administered the anesthetic, a nurse became the surgical assistant, and the work began under an Anglepoise light as darkness fell.

The first surgical incision, nervously performed, did not reveal any bleeding, so other incisions needed to be performed through Shane's small skull to find the source of the bleeding. More calls to the neurosurgeon for direction and reassurance were made, and his advice was followed in every exact detail. After six hours of anxiety and pressure, the surgery was completed, the hemorrhage of blood into the brain cavity ceased, and a successful outcome was achieved. Serenity replaced chaos. It was around midnight.

The doctor was a young father. He thought about his family and the blessings they enjoyed. He was grateful for the many tender mercies of the Lord in his life and especially for the presence of the Comforter during the last 12 hours. He was grateful for the presence of an unseen expert who imparted of His far-greater knowledge freely in his time of need.

At the critical time in a desperate situation, the Lord provided the guidance

and the ability for a young, inexperienced doctor to perform a miracle and preserve the life of a small boy, who was precious before the Lord.

Neil Hutchison was the young doctor who prayed for help and had the faith to rely on the Lord and the neurosurgeon, enabling him to perform a miracle under the most difficult of conditions. He now serves as the bishop in the East Coast Bays Ward in Auckland, New Zealand.

Bishop Hutchison advised me, “I had the privilege of meeting Shane and his father a couple of years ago in Christchurch for the first time since that day in 1976. He is an electrician with his own business and is aware of no defects from his long operation. He is such a nice chap, and I can’t help pondering on how thin the veil is between this life and the next.”

“And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.”⁵

Fruits of faith

Elder Richard G. Scott taught: “You will gather the fruits of faith as you follow the principles God has established for its use.” One of those principles is to “trust in God and in His willingness to provide help when needed no matter how challenging the circumstance.”⁶

Elder Robert D. Hales testified that Joseph Smith, “as a 14-year-old boy, . . . exercised unwavering faith and followed the prophet James’s direction to ‘ask of God.’ Because of Joseph’s prophetic calling, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him and gave him instructions.”⁷

President Thomas S. Monson has encouraged us: “As we offer unto the Lord our family and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in him. . . . If any of us has been slow to hearken to the counsel to pray always, there is no finer hour to begin than now.”⁸

It doesn’t matter whether it is a little boy with a simple request, or a medical

doctor with a critical, life-threatening challenge before him: Heavenly Father will hear our humble prayer and will give us the comfort and guidance we seek.

The stepping-stone of family

A third stepping-stone and an essential part of the path that leads us safely home to our Father in Heaven is the family.

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught us: “The family is divine. It was instituted by our Heavenly Father. It encompasses the most sacred of all relationships. Only through its organization can the purposes of the Lord be fulfilled.”⁹

President Hinckley continued: “I believe in the family where there is a husband who regards his companion as his greatest asset and treats her accordingly; where there is a wife who looks upon her husband as her anchor and strength, her comfort and security; where there are children who look to mother and father with respect and gratitude; where there are parents who look upon those children as blessings and find a great and serious and wonderful challenge in their nurture and rearing.”¹⁰

I sincerely believe that in the sanctity of the family our love, loyalty, respect, and support for each other can become the *sacred shield* that will protect us from the fiery darts of the devil. In the family circle, filled with the love of Christ, we will be able to find peace, happiness, and protection from the wickedness of the world that surrounds us.

I testify that the family is the unit and the vehicle through which we can be sealed together and return, as a family, into the presence of our heavenly parents, there to experience eternal joy and happiness.

I sincerely pray that we will use the stepping-stones of prayer, faith, and our family to prepare and help us to return to our Father in Heaven and gain life eternal,

that our very purpose for being upon this earth will be successfully accomplished, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 112:10.
2. James 1:5–6.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1976, 83; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 58.
4. 3 Nephi 18:20.

5. Moroni 7:33.
6. In Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 79; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 76.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 73.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 130; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 509.
9. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 206.
10. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 205.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

The story of a horse called Snowman

Harry de Leyer was late to the auction on that snowy day in 1956, and all of the good horses had already been sold. The few that remained were old and spent and had been bought by a company that would salvage them.

Harry, the riding master at a girls' school in New York, was about to leave when one of these horses—an uncared-for gray gelding with ugly-looking wounds on its legs—caught his eye. The animal still bore the marks that had been made by a heavy work harness, evidence to the hard life he had led. But something about him captured Harry's attention, so he offered \$80 for him.

It was snowing when Harry's children saw the horse for the first time, and because of the coat of snow on the horse's back, the children named him "Snowman."

Harry took good care of the horse, which turned out to be a gentle and reliable friend—a horse the girls liked to ride because he was steady and didn't startle like some of the others. In fact, Snowman made such rapid improvement that a neighbor purchased him for twice what Harry had originally paid.

But Snowman kept disappearing from the neighbor's pasture—sometimes ending up in adjoining potato fields, other times back at Harry's. It appeared that the horse

must have jumped over the fences between the properties, but that seemed impossible—Harry had never seen Snowman jump over anything much higher than a fallen log.

But eventually, the neighbor's patience came to an end, and he insisted Harry take back the horse.

For years, Harry's great dream had been to produce a champion jumping horse. He'd had moderate success in the past, but in order to compete at the highest levels, he knew he would have to buy a pedigreed horse that had been specifically bred to jump. And that kind of pedigree would cost far more than he could afford.

Snowman was already getting old—he was eight when Harry had purchased him—and he had been badly treated. But, apparently, Snowman wanted to jump, so Harry decided to see what the horse could do.

What Harry saw made him think that maybe his horse had a chance to compete.

In 1958, Harry entered Snowman in his first competition. Snowman stood among the beautifully bred champion horses, looking very much out of place. Other horse breeders called Snowman a "flea-bitten gray."

But a wonderful, unbelievable thing happened that day.

Snowman won!

Harry continued to enter Snowman in other competitions, and Snowman continued to win.

Audiences cheered every time Snowman won an event. He became a symbol of how extraordinary an ordinary horse could be. He appeared on television. Stories and books were written about him.

As Snowman continued to win, one buyer offered \$100,000 for the old plow horse, but Harry would not sell. In 1958 and 1959, Snowman was named “Horse of the Year.” Eventually, the gray gelding—who had once been marked for sale to a low bidder—was inducted into the show jumping Hall of Fame.¹

For many, Snowman was much more than a horse. He became an example of the hidden, untapped potential that lies within each of us.

Qualities of those who live abundant lives

I have had the opportunity to become acquainted with many wonderful people from many walks of life. I have known rich and poor, famous and modest, wise and otherwise.

Some were burdened with heavy sorrows; others radiated a confident inner peace. Some smoldered with unquenchable bitterness, while others glowed with irrepressible joy. Some appeared defeated, while others—in spite of adversity—overcame discouragement and despair.

I have heard some claim, perhaps only partly in jest, that the only happy people are those who simply don’t have a firm grasp of what is happening around them.

But I believe otherwise.

I have known many who walk in joy and radiate happiness.

I have known many who live lives of abundance.

And I believe I know why.

Today, I want to list a few of the characteristics that the happiest people I know have in common. They are qualities that

can transform ordinary existence into a life of excitement and abundance.

They drink deeply of living waters

First, they drink deeply of living waters.

The Savior taught that “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give . . . shall never thirst; [for it] shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”²

Fully understood and embraced, the gospel of Jesus Christ heals broken hearts, infuses meaning into lives, binds loved ones together with ties that transcend mortality, and brings to life a sublime joy.

President Lorenzo Snow said, “The Lord has not given us the gospel that we may go around mourning all the days of our lives.”³

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not a religion of mourning and gloom. The faith of our fathers is one of hope and joy. It is not a gospel of chains but a gospel of wings.

To embrace it fully is to be filled with wonder and to walk with an inner fire. Our Savior proclaimed, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”⁴

Do you seek peace of mind?

Drink deeply of living waters.

Do you seek forgiveness? peace? understanding? joy?

Drink deeply of living waters.

The abundant life is a spiritual life. Too many sit at the banquet table of the gospel of Jesus Christ and merely nibble at the feast placed before them. They go through the motions—attending their meetings perhaps, glancing at scriptures, repeating familiar prayers—but their hearts are far away. If they are honest, they would admit to being more interested in the latest neighborhood rumors, stock market trends, and their favorite TV show than they are in the supernal wonders and sweet ministrings of the Holy Spirit.

Do you wish to partake of this living water and experience that divine well springing up within you to everlasting life?

Then be not afraid. Believe with all your hearts. Develop an unshakable faith in the Son of God. Let your hearts reach out in earnest prayer. Fill your minds with knowledge of Him. Forsake your weaknesses. Walk in holiness and harmony with the commandments.

Drink deeply of the living waters of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They fill their hearts with love

The second quality of those who live abundant lives is that they fill their hearts with love.

Love is the essence of the gospel and the greatest of all the commandments. The Savior taught that every other commandment and prophetic teaching hangs upon it.⁵ The Apostle Paul wrote that “all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”⁶

We often don’t know the reach of a simple act of kindness. The Prophet Joseph Smith was a model of compassion and love. One day, a group of eight African Americans arrived at the Prophet’s home in Nauvoo. They had traveled from their home in Buffalo, New York, some 800 miles away, so they could be with the prophet of God and with the Saints. Although they were free, they were forced to hide from those who might mistake them for runaway slaves. They endured cold and hardship, wearing out shoes and then socks until they walked on bare feet all the way to the City of Joseph. When they arrived in Nauvoo, the Prophet welcomed them into his home and helped each of them find a place to stay.

But there was one, a girl named Jane, who did not have a place to go, and she wept, not knowing what to do.

“We won’t have tears here,” Joseph said to her. He turned to Emma and said,

“Here’s a girl who says she [doesn’t have a] home. Don’t you think she has a home here?”

Emma agreed. From that day on, Jane lived as a member of the family.

Years after the Prophet’s martyrdom and after she had joined the pioneers and made the long trek to Utah, Jane said that sometimes she would still “wake up in the middle of the night, and just think about Brother Joseph and Sister Emma and how good they [were] to me. Joseph Smith,” she said, “was the finest man I ever saw on Earth.”⁷

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said that those who reach out to lift and serve others “will come to know a happiness . . . never known before. . . . Heaven knows there are so very, very, very many people in this world who need help. Oh, so very . . . many. Let’s get the cankering, selfish attitude out of our lives, my brothers and sisters, and stand a little taller and reach a little higher in the service of others.”⁸

We are all busy. It’s easy to find excuses for not reaching out to others, but I imagine they will sound as hollow to our Heavenly Father as the elementary school boy who gave his teacher a note asking that he be excused from school March 30th through the 34th.

Those who devote their lives in pursuit of their own selfish desires at the exclusion of others will discover that, in the end, their joy is shallow and their lives have little meaning.

On a tombstone of one such person was carved the following epitaph:

Here lies a miser who lived for himself,
And cared for nothing but gathering pelf,
Now, where he is, or how he fares,
Nobody knows and nobody cares.⁹

We are happiest when our lives are connected to others through unselfish love

and service. President J. Reuben Clark taught that “there is no greater blessing, no greater joy and happiness than comes to us from relieving the distress of others.”¹⁰

They create a masterpiece of their lives

The third quality of those who live abundant lives is that they, with the help of their Heavenly Father, create a masterpiece of their lives.

No matter our age, circumstances, or abilities, each one of us can create something remarkable of his life.

David saw himself as a shepherd, but the Lord saw him as a king of Israel. Joseph of Egypt served as a slave, but the Lord saw him as a seer. Mormon wore the armor of a soldier, but the Lord saw him as a prophet.

We are sons and daughters of an immortal, loving, and all-powerful Father in Heaven. We are created as much from the dust of eternity as we are from the dust of the earth. Every one of us has potential we can scarcely imagine.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”¹¹

How is it possible, then, that so many see themselves merely as an old gray horse that isn’t good for much? There is a spark of greatness within every one of us—a gift from our loving and eternal Heavenly Father. What we do with that gift is up to us.

Love the Lord with all your heart, might, mind, and strength. Enlist in great and noble causes. Create of your homes sanctuaries of holiness and strength. Magnify your callings in the Church. Fill your minds with learning. Strengthen your testimonies. Reach out to others.

Create of your life a masterpiece.

The abundant life is a journey

Brothers and sisters, the abundant life does not come to us packaged and ready-made. It’s not something we can order and expect to find delivered with the afternoon mail. It does not come without hardship or sorrow.

It comes through faith, hope, and charity. And it comes to those who, in spite of hardship and sorrow, understand the words of one writer who said, “In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.”¹²

The abundant life isn’t something we arrive at. Rather, it is a magnificent journey that began long, long ages ago and will never, never end.

One of the great comforts of the gospel of Jesus Christ is our knowledge that this earthly existence is merely a twinkle in the eye of eternity. Whether we are at the beginning of our mortal journey or at the end, this life is merely one step—one small step.

Our search for the abundant life is cloaked not only in the robes of this mortal clay; its true end can only be comprehended from the perspective of the eternities that stretch infinitely before us.

Brothers and sisters, it is in the quest of the abundant life that we find our destiny.

As illustrated in the story of an old, discarded horse that had within him the soul of a champion, there is within each of us a divine spark of greatness. Who knows of what we are capable if we only try? The abundant life is within our reach if only we will drink deeply of living water, fill our hearts with love, and create of our lives a masterpiece.

That we may do so is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Rutherford George Montgomery, *Snowman* (1962).

2. John 4:14.
3. *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 61.
4. John 10:10.
5. See Matthew 22:40.
6. Galatians 5:14.
7. Neil K. Newell, "Joseph Smith Moments: Stranger in Nauvoo," *Church News*, Dec. 31, 2005, 16.
8. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 597.
9. In Obert C. Tanner, *Christ's Ideals for Living* (Sunday School manual, 1955), 266.
10. "Fundamentals of the Church Welfare Plan," *Church News*, Mar. 2, 1946, 9.
11. 1 Corinthians 2:9.
12. Albert Camus, in John Bartlett, comp., *Familiar Quotations*, 16th ed. (1980), 732.

President Faust

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Brigham Young University, the priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music. We also extend thanks to all who have participated in any way in these proceedings.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide." After the choir has sung, the benediction will be offered by Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Until again we meet

Just a word in conclusion, my brothers and sisters, bringing to a close this great conference. The music has been magnificent, the prayers have been inspired, and the talks and testimonies have touched our hearts, lifted our spirits, and confirmed our faith.

Now, as we return to our homes and our vocational labors, may we remember and constantly express in our lives the counsel we have received. May we remain fortified against the wiles of the adversary. May our labors in our many Church responsibilities be not burdensome, but rather may they bring joy and satisfaction. May we live together as husbands and

wives, as parents and children, with love and kindness and respect for one another.

God bless you, my beloved brothers and sisters. I leave my love and my testimony and my blessing with you and pray that the Lord will be with us each and every one until again we meet. May heaven's blessings rest upon you, I humbly pray in the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Abide with Me; 'Tis Eventide."

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir. John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

A combined choir from Brigham Young University provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Rosalind Hall directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A priesthood choir from the Orem and Salt Lake institutes provided music for

the priesthood session. Douglas Brenchley, Ryan Eggett, and Rick Decker directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Linda Margetts, and Bonnie Goodliffe.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

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